This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

THE

WORKS

OF

ROBT. LEIGHTON, D. D.

SOMETIME

BISHOP OF DUNBLANE,

AFTERWARDS

ARCHBISHOP OF GLASGOW.

A new and enlarged Edition:

TOGETHER WITH THE

LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,

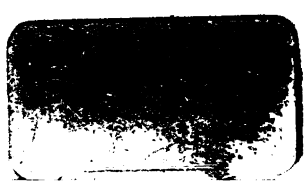
BY THE

REV. G. JERMENT.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
Printed by William Nicholson, Warner Street,
FOR R. OGLE, GREAT TURNSTILE,
HOLBORN;
F. AND C. RIVINGTON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD; J. HATCHARD, PICCADILLY; E. MATHEWS, STRAND; JORDAN AND MAXWELL, FLEET-STREET; BUTTON AND SON, PATERNOSTER-ROW; OGLE AND AIKMAN, EDINBURGH; M. OGLE, GLASGOW; AND J. CLARK, ABERDEEN.
1805.

B-9



BX
5255
.L53
1805

English works, by which the sense of many passages is absolutely destroyed, and that of scores and hundreds very much obscured, made me the more ready to attempt the paying this little tribute of respect to his memory, which no words or actions can fully express; and I was morally certain, that whatever came from such a pen, would be so entertaining and improving, that I could not fail of being immediately and abundantly rewarded for whatever pains it might cost me to prepare it for the public.

When these manuscripts came to my hands, I found new reasons to be satisfied with the task I had undertaken, which indeed was welcome to me in proportion to the degree in which I perceived it must be laborious. The papers which were sent me, were copies of others, which I suppose were transcribed from short hand notes, which some skilful writer had happily taken from the archbishop's mouth. They were beyond comparison more inaccurate than those of his printed works, which are most remarkably so, and yet they contained such inimitable traces of sweet natural eloquence, and of genuine and lively piety, as speak the author far more certainly, than the most exact resemblance of what was known to be his hand writing could possibly have done.

Besides a large collection of letters, of which I shall afterwards speak, the papers consisted of his meditations and expositions on *Psalm* xxxix. on part of *Rom.* xii. and the whole sixth of *Isaiah*. On this last sublime and instructive portion of scripture, there were three distinct expositions, delivered, as I suppose, at different places; the latter being, so far as I could

judge, supplemental to the former, yet so that additions were made to almost every verse, and sometimes the same things which had been said before, expressed in a different manner; I judged it consistent with the strictest fidelity owing to the works of so illustrious a person (which absolutely forbad my adding or diminishing any thing) to divide them, and incorporate them into one whole; which could not possibly be done, without transcribing the piece, omitting those passages in the former, that were afterwards more copiously or more correctly expressed in the latter; and inserting here and there a line or two, by way of connection, to prevent those disagreeable chasms which would otherwise have defaced much of its beauty. For the rest the reader may assure himself, that if (which I cannot doubt) these papers came genuine into my hand, they are now entirely so, in every sentence, and in every clause; for in those very few places, where the sense was to me absolutely unintelligible, and the construction incurably ungrammatical, I chose rather to drop such imperfect fragments, than by uncertain additions of my own, to run the risk of imputing to the good archbishop, what I was not sure he ever wrote. Had these fragments contained hints of any things curious in criticism, history, or controversy of any kind, I would have published them apart, at the end of these volumes: but as they were very few, and like the rest of his writings, entirely of a devotional and practical nature, I thought it would have been a formality nearly bordering upon impertinence, to have collected and inserted them in such a manner.

The *Ethico-critical meditations* on the iv. xxxii. and cxxx. *Psalms*, abound with so many charming sentiments and expressions, that I could not but desire the *English* reader should share in part of the pleasure they had given me. I have therefore taken care they should be faithfully translated, and have reviewed the version with as much accuracy as my other engagements would allow. It is indeed impossible to transfuse the inimitable elegance and strength of the original into any translation; but he who is incapable of the pleasure of using that, will I hope be glad to enjoy the benefit of such eminently pious reflections, though under the disadvantage of a dress much less beautiful and ornamental.

When this part of the design was executed, I was insensibly, by an ambiguity of expression in the proposals printed at *Edinburgh*, led into another labour, much greater than I at first imagined it would have proved, I mean that of correcting the quarto edition of the incomparable commentary upon the first epistle of *Peter*, which I may venture to pronounce the most faulty piece of printing I ever remembered to have seen in any language. At first I intended only to have noted those gross mistakes which quite pervert that any person of common penetration must see to have been the original sense, and yet are taken no notice of in the erroneous table of *errata*. But afterwards considering what an embarrassment it is to common readers, to see commas, colons and periods, placed almost in a promiscuous disorder, without any regard to their proper signification, which is the case here, at least in every ten lines, I deter-

mined to go over the whole, pen in hand, and correct every page as I would have done a proof from the press.

While I was thus employed, I observed that the confusion which many have complained of in the archbishop's method, and which I myself really thought matter of some just complaint too, was frequently the consequence of omitting the numeral marks, which should denote the subordination of heads, and this where some of them are inserted, as if on purpose to increase the perplexity. And it also very frequently results from the neglect of giving a proper view at first of the method proposed, and which was worst of all, in not a few places, from placing the number of the head, instead of the head itself. This perhaps was done with design in the first copy, to save the trouble of writing it over again; but it is extremely inconvenient to the reader, as it most naturally leads him to mistake the first sentence of the enlargement, for the head it is intended to illustrate.

This is a remark which is applicable to many of our author's sermons; and I wish it had been more constantly attended to in that valuable edition of them published by Mr. *Wilson* at *Edinburgh* two years ago, in comparison of which nevertheless it is certain that neither of the former are to be named. I thought it no unwarrantable liberty at all, but a high point of justice, to supply with my pen what is so evidently deficient, and I hope I shall not be condemned for venturing, as I was expressly desired to do, here and there to exchange a *Scots* word or phrase for an *English* one, cer-

tainly of the same signification, and more generally understood. I thought that to have distinguished all these corrections by different characters, crotchets or inverted commas, would have injured the beauty of the impressions, and might have looked like a little affectation of making a vain parade of what I have done. If any are curious enough to desire exactly to know it, they may get surer information, by comparing this edition with the former, by which they may judge of the little, but, as I thought, very necessary freedoms taken with the manuscript pieces. And if any perceive, as I suppose most observant readers that make the comparison, will, that the commentry upon *Peter*, now reads in a much rounder, clearer and pleasanter manner than it before did; they will only reflect how much a multitude of little negligences and errors, each of them seeming in itself minutely and inconsiderably small, may affect the beauty, character and use of a work in which they are found.

On the whole, the preparing these volumes for the press, hath generally taken up a little of my time in the intervals of other business, daily for several months; but I am far from repenting the labour I have bestowed upon it. The delight and edification which I have found in the writings of this *wonderful man*, for such I must deliberately call him, would have been a full equivalent for my pains, separate from all prospect of that effect which they might have upon others. For truly I know not that I have ever spent a quarter of an hour in reviewing any of them, but even amidst that interruption, which a critical examination of the copy

would naturally give, I have felt some impressions which I could wish always to retain. I can hardly forbear saying, as a considerable philosopher and eminent divine, with whom I have the honour of an intimate correspondence and friendship, said to me in a letter long ago*, and when my acquaintance with our author's works was but beginning, "There is a spirit in "Archbishop *Leighton* I never met with in any "human writings, nor can I read many lines in "them without being moved."

Indeed it would be difficult for me to say where, but in the sacred oracles, I have ever found such heart-affecting lessons of simplicity and humility, candour and benevolence, exalted piety, without the least tincture of enthusiasm, and an entire mortification to every earthly interest, without any mixture of splenetic resentment. Nor can I ever sufficiently admire that artless manner in which he lays open, as it were, his whole breast to the reader, and shews, without seeming to be at all conscious of it himself, all the various graces that can adorn and ennoble the christian, running like so many veins of precious ore in the rich mine where they grew. And hence, if I mistake not, is that wonderful energy of his discourses, obvious as they seem, unadorned as they really are, which I have observed to be owned by persons of eminent piety in the most different ranks, and amidst all the variety of education and capacity that can be imagined. As every eye is struck by consummate beauty, though in the plainest dress, and the sight of such an object impresses much more than any

* April 10. 1740. The Reverend Dr. Henry Miles, F. R. S.

laboured description of complexion, features, or air, or any harangue on the nicest rules of proportion which could come into consideration; so in the works of this *great adept in true christianity*, we do not so much hear of goodness, as see it in its most genuine traces; see him a living image of his divine Master, for such indeed his writings shew, I had almost said, demonstrate him to have been, by such internal characters as surely a bad man could not counterfeit, and no good man can so much as suspect.

Where the matter is so remarkably excellent, a wise and pious reader will not be over solicitous about the style; yet I think he will find it in these compositions, far above any reasonable contempt or censure. When I consider what the prevailing taste was a century ago in this respect, I have often wondered at the many true beauties of expression that occur in these pieces, and the general freedom from these false and fanciful ornaments, if they are to be called ornaments, which occur in contemporary authors. On the whole, the style wonderfully suits the sentiments; and however destitute of the flights of oratory, has such a dignity and force mingled with that simplicity, which is to be sure its chief characteristic; so that on the whole, it has often reminded me of that soft and sweet eloquence of *Ulysses*, which *Homer** describes as falling like flakes of snow; and if I might be allowed to pursue the similitude, I could add, like that, it penetrates deep into the mind too, and tends to enrich and fructify it.

It is chiefly the practical preacher that shines

* Καὶ ἐπεα νιφαδεσσιν ἐοικοτα χειμερινησιν
Il. 3. v. 222.

in these lectures, yet it seems to me, that the judicious expositor will also appear, and appear most to the most competent judges. There is a sort of criticism on the sacred writings, which none but an eminently good man can attain; and if I am at all capable of judging concerning it, it remarkably reigns here. We find indeed little of that laborious sifting of words and syllables, in which some have worn out so much time and pains, if not to no purpose at all, (for I will not assert that) at least to purposes very low and inconsiderable, when compared with these which our author pursues and attains. The reader will, I think, find great light poured on many very difficult passages, especially in the first epistle of *Peter*, in a very masterly manner, and often by a few weighty words. But these hints are generally very short; for the good author appears to have lopped off every thing as superfluous, which did not immediately tend to make his readers better, or rather to have had a heart so entirely possessed with this desire, that nothing else ever offered itself to his view. Whatever of an ornamental kind is to be found in these practical parts of the work, which certainly constitute more than six sevenths of the whole, appears to have been quite unlabour-ed and unsought; but it conduces much to our entertainment, and I hope in its consequence to our improvement, that the author had naturally a very fine imagination; the consequence of which is, that his works abound with a charming variety of beautiful figures, springing up most naturally from his subjects, and so adding some graces of novelty, to thoughts in themselves most obvious and common.

On the whole, I cannot but hope that God will be pleased to bless the publication of these pieces, in these circumstances, as an occasion of reviving a sense of religion, and promoting the interest of true christianity. It has appeared to me a memorable event, that when the extreme modesty of archbishop *Leighton* had been inexorable to all the intreaties of his many friends, to print something during his life, so many of his precious remains should with such solicitude be gleaned up after death, and some of them more than threescore years after it; and that they should be read with such high esteem and delight, as it is plain many of them have been, by persons of the most different denominations throughout *Great Britain*. I am very sensible of it as an honour done to me in the course of divine providence, that the task I have here executed, should so very unexpectedly be devolved upon me. I have no property at all in the work, nor the least secular interest in its success: what I have done was intirely the result of love to the author's memory, and concern for the public good: but I shall be gloriously rewarded, if the labour I have bestowed upon it, be the occasion of promoting these great ends, which animated the discourses and actions of the holy man, who has now dwelt so long among the blessed inhabitants of that world, after which he so ardently aspired, while yet amongst mortals. And let me be permitted to add, that I have some secret hope this publication, in these circumstances, may, among other good effects, promote that spirit of catholicism, for which our author was so remarkable, and extend it among various deno-

minations of christians, in the northern and southern parts of our island. If the sincerest language or actions can express the disposition of the heart, it will here be apparent, that a diversity of judgment, with regard to episcopacy, and several forms both of discipline and worship connected with it, have produced in my mind no alienation, no indifference towards *Archbishop Leighton*, nor prevented my delighting in his works, and profiting by them. In this respect I trust my brethren in *Scotland* will, for their own sake, and that of religion in general, shew the like candour. On the other side, as I have observed with great pleasure and thankfulness how much many of the established clergy in this part of *Britain* are advancing in moderation towards their dissenting brethren, I am fully assured they will not like these excellent pieces the worse, for having passed through my hand. It is truly my grief, that any thing should divide me from the fullest communion with those to whom I am united in bonds of as tender affection, as I bear to any of my fellow-christians. And it is my daily prayer, that God will by his gentle, but powerful influence on our minds, mutually dispose us more and more for such a further union, as may most effectually consolidate the protestant cause, establish the throne of our *gracious Sovereign*, remove the scandals our divisons have occasioned, and strengthen our hands in these efforts, by which we are attempting, and might then I hope more successfully attempt the service of our common christianity. In the mean time, I desire most sincerely to bless God for any advances that are made towards it; and I

cannot forbear to illustrate and confirm my thoughts on this head, by inserting the elegant words of a most worthy member of the church of *England*, well known in the learned world, as I have lately had the honour of receiving them from his own pen. I conceal his name, and therefore hope it is no violation of the laws of friendship, to insert at large a passage from a familiar letter, which, if it warms my reader's breast as it did mine, will, be not only an entertainment, but a blessing to many, and which is as suitable a conclusion of this preface, as if it had been written in that view. "I am glad," says he, "that christianity begins to be so well "understood and taught by so many men of "parts and learning in all sects, the fruits of "which appear in a candour and charity un-"known to all ages of the church, except the "primitive, I had almost said, the apostolic "age. Does not this give you a prospect, "though perhaps still very distant, of the com-"pletion of the famous prophecy that speaks "of the *lion and the lamb lying down together* in "the kingdom of the Messiah? Lions there "have been hitherto in all churches, but too "many fierce, greedy, and blood-thirsty lions, "though often disguised like lambs, and some "lambs there have been, simple enough to think "it expedient for the flock, to assume the habit "and terror of lions: but I hope they now be-"gin to undeceive themselves, and to consider "christianity as intending to bring back the "world to that state of innocence which it en-"joyed before the fall, when in one and the "same paradise, to use the words of *Milton*,

———Frisking play'd
All beasts of th' earth, since wild, and of all chace,
In wood or wilderness, forest or den.
Sporting the lion ramp'd, and in his paw
Dandled the kid.———

" To attain this happy state," continues this amiable writer, " all christians should unite " their endeavours, and instead of looking out " for and insisting upon points of difference and " distinction, seek for these only in which they " *do* or *may* agree. They may at least *sow the* " *seeds* of peace and unity, though they should " not live to *reap the fruits* of it in this world. " *Blessed are the peace-makers*, says the prince of " peace, *for they shall be called the children of God.* " An appellation infinitely more hononrable " than that of pastor, bishop, archbishop, pa- " triarch, cardinal or pope, attended with a re- " compence infinitely surpassing the richest re- " venues of the highest ecclesiastical dignity." I join my hearty wishes and prayers with those of my much esteemed friend, that we may all more and more deserve this character, and attain this its reward.

P. DODDRIDGE.

Northampton, April 26,
1748.

PREFACE.

READER,

I ONLY beg leave to introduce to you ARCHBISHOP LEIGHTON. If you be already acquainted with him, I need not say any more. You are pleased; and I withdraw, that you may immediately enjoy his edifying discourse.

But, if you and he have hitherto been strangers, I am sorry for it; because it has been your loss. Having been acquainted with him some years, I recommend him as one of the most pleasing, edifying and savoury companions with whom you can form an intimacy. I have sometimes had occasion to break off the connections I have formed for myself; and to lament those that I have formed for others. This has made me somewhat cautious in these matters. But it has not been thus in respect to this worthy prelate; who now makes a new appearance upon the public stage. He improves by acquaintance, and (which is not often the case) makes himself dearer by familiarity. *I know none like him.* And I am persuaded, christian Reader, that you and I shall reflect upon the opportunity of making LEIGHTON *yours* with pleasure: and that you will not grudge the small pittance that you part with, for a treasure so valuable.

As to his *external* garb; and the manner in which it is put on; I hope, you will allow, that it is the best in which he has yet made his appearance. This is indeed trivial when compared with *internal*

worth; but it sometimes gives a person courage to speak with a better grace, and makes him heard with greater attention.

I beg pardon for taking this liberty with a character so venerable, and exalted, as that of ARCHBISHOP LEIGHTON is universally allowed to be. He highly deserved to be introduced by some person of eminence; yea, by the late Rev. James Hervey himself.—He has indeed exalted him already in the following words. "Thus says an "excellent Author [LEIGHTON]; who writes "with the most amiable spirit of benevolence; "with the most unaffected air of humility; and "like the sacred originals, from which he copies "with a majestic simplicity of stile."

That this work, once more, may be made useful to the church of God, is the sincere prayer of,

HENRY FOSTER.

A PRACTICAL

COMMENTARY

UPON THE

First Epistle General of St. Peter.

Chapter i. Verse 1.

Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.

THE grace of God in the heart of man, is a tender plant in a strange unkindly soil; and therefore cannot well prosper and grow, without much care and pains, and that of a skilful hand, and that hath the art of cherishing it: for this end, hath God given the constant ministry of the word to his church, not only for the first work of conversion, but also for confirming and increasing of his grace in the hearts of his children.

And though the extraordinary ministers of the gospel, the apostles, had principally the former for their charge, the converting of unbelievers, *Jews* and *Gentiles*, and so the planting of churches, to be after kept, and watered by others, as the apostle intimates[a], yet did they not neglect the other work of strengthening the grace of God begun in the new converts of those times, both by revisiting them, and exhorting them in person, as they could, and by the supply of their writing to them when absent.

[a] 1 Cor. iii. 6.

And the benefit of this extends (not by accident, but by the purpose, and good providence of God) to the church of God in all succeeding ages.

This excellent *epistle* (full of evangelical doctrine and apostolical authority) is a brief, and yet very clear summary both of the consolations and instructions needful for the encouragement and direction of a christian in his journey to Heaven, elevating his thoughts and desires to that happiness, and strengthening him against all opposition in the way, both that of corruption within, and temptations and afflictions from without.

The heads of doctrine contained in it are many, but the main that are most insisted on are these three, *faith*, *obedience* and *patience*, to establish them in believing, to direct them in doing, and comfort them in suffering. And because the first is the ground-work and support of the other two, this first chapter is much in that, persuading them of the truth of that mystery they had received and did believe, *viz.* their redemption and salvation by Christ Jesus; that inheritance of immortality bought by his blood for them, and the evidence and stability of their right and title to it.

And then he uses this belief, this assurance of the glory to come, as the great persuasive to the other two, both to holy obedience, and constant patience, since nothing can be too much either to forego, or undergo, either to do, or to suffer for the attainment of that blessed state.

And as from the consideration of that object, and matter of the hope of believers, he encourages to patience, and exhorteth to holiness in this chapter in general; so in the following chapters, he expresses more particularly, both the universal, and special duties of christians, both in doing and suffering, often setting before them to whom he wrote, the matchless example of the Lord Jesus, and the greatness of their engagement to follow him.

In the two first verses, we have the *inscription*

and *salutation*, in the usual stile of the apostolic epistles.

The *inscription* hath the *author* and the *address*, from whom, and to whom. The *author* of this *epistle* is designed by his *name*, *Peter*, and his *calling*, an apostle.

We shall not insist upon his name, that it was imposed by Christ, and what is its signification; this the Evangelists teach us[b].

By that which is spoken of him in divers passages of the gospel, he is very remarkable amongst the apostles, both for his graces, and his failings, eminent in zeal and courage; and yet stumbling oft in his forwardness, and once grossly falling: And these by the Providence of God being recorded in Scripture, give a check to the excess of *Rome's* conceit concerning this apostle. Their extolling and exalting him above the rest, is not for his cause, and much less to the honour of his Lord and master Jesus Christ, for he is injured and dishonoured by it; but it is in favour of themselves, as *Alexander* distinguished his two friends, that the one was a friend of *Alexander*, the other a friend of the *king*. That preferment they give this apostle, is not in good will to *Peter*, but in the desire of *primacy*. But whatsoever he was, they would be much in pain to prove *Rome's* right to it by succession. And if ever it had any such right, we may confidently say, it has forfeited it long ago, by departing from St. *Peter's* footsteps, and from his faith, and retaining too much those things wherein he was faulty, namely,

His unwillingness to hear of, and consent to Christ's sufferings, his *master spare thyself*, or *far be it from thee*, in those they are like him: for thus they would disburthen and exempt the church from the cross, from the real cross of afflictions, and, instead of that, have nothing but painted, or carved, or gilded crosses; these they are content to embrace, and worship too, but cannot endure to hear of the

[b] John i. 42. Matthew xvi. 18, &c.

other. Instead of the cross of affliction, they make the *crown* or *mitre* the badge of their church, and will have it known by prosperity, and outward pomp, and so turn the church militant, into the church triumphant, not considering that it is *Babylon's* voice, not the church's, *I sit as a queen, and shall see no sorrow.*

Again, they are like him in his saying on the mount at Christ's transfiguration, when he knew not what he said, *It is good to be here:* so they have little of the true glory of Christ, but the false glory of that monarchy on their seven hills, *It is good to be here*, say they.

Again, in their undue striking with the sword, not the enemies, as he, but the faithful friends and servants of Jesus Christ. But to proceed,

We see here *Peter's* office or title, *an apostle*, not *chief bishop.* Some in their glossing have been so impudent as to add that beside the text; though[c] he gives that title to Christ alone, and to himself only *fellow elder*, and here, not *prince of the apostles*, but *an apostle*, restored and re-established after his fall, by repentance, and by Christ himself after his own death and resurrection[d]. Thus we have in our apostle a singular instance of human frailty on the one side, and of the sweetness of divine grace on the other. Free, and rich grace it is indeed, that forgives and swallows up multitudes of sins, of greatest sins, not only sins before conversion, as to St. *Paul*, but foul offences committed after conversion, as to *David*, and to this apostle; not only once raising them from the dead, but when they fall, stretching out the same hand, and raising them again, and restoring them to their station, and comforting them in it by his *free spirit*, as *David* prays. Not only to cleanse polluted clay, but to work it into vessels of honour, yea of the most defiled shape to make the most refined vessels, not vessels of honour of the lowest sort, but for the highest and most honourable services, vessels to bear his own

[c] Chapter v. 4. [d] John xxi.

precious name to the nations; making the most unworthy and the most unfit, fit by his grace to be his messengers.

Of Jesus Christ.] Both as the beginning and end of his apostleship, as Christ is called *Alpha* and *Omega*[c], chosen and called by him, and called to this, to preach him, and salvation wrought by him.

Apostle of Jesus Christ.] Sent by him, and the message no other but his name, to make that known. And what this apostleship was *then*, after some extraordinary way, befitting these first times of the gospel, that the ministry of the word in ordinary is *now*, and therefore an employment of more difficulty and excellency than is usually conceived by many, not only of those that look upon it, but even of those that are exercised in it, to be ambassadors for the greatest of kings, and upon no mean employment, that great treaty of peace and reconcilement betwixt him and mankind[f].

This *Epistle* is directed to the *Elect*, who are described here, by their *temporal* and by their *spiritual* conditions. The one hath very much dignity and comfort in it; but the other hath neither, but rather the contrary of both: and therefore the apostle, intending their comfort, mentions the one but in passing, to signify to whom particularly he sent his *Epistle*. But the other is that which he would have their thoughts dwell upon, and therefore he prosecutes it in his following discourse. And if we look to the order of the words, their temporal condition is but interjected; for it is said, *to the Elect* first, and then *to the strangers scattered*, &c. And he would have this as it were drowned in the other, *according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.*

That those dispersed strangers that dwelt in the countries here named, were *Jews*, appears, if we look to the foregoing *Epistle*, where the same word is used, and expressly appropriated to the *Jews*[g]. And St. *Peter*[h] is called *an apostle of the circumcision*, as exercising his apostleship most towards them; and

[c] Rev. ii. 11. [f] 2 Cor. v. 20. [g] James i. 1. [h] Gal. ii.

there is in some passages of the *Epistle* somewhat, that, though belonging to all Christians, yet hath, in the strain and way of expression, a particular fitness to the believing *Jews*, as being particularly verified in them which was spoken of their nation[i].

Some argue from the Name, *Strangers*, that the *Gentiles* are here meant, which seems not to be: for proselyte *Gentiles* were indeed called strangers in *Jerusalem*, and by the *Jews*. But were not the *Jews* strangers in these places, *Pontus*, *Galatia*, *Cappadocia*, *Asia* and *Bithynia*? Not strangers dwelling together in a prosperous flourishing condition, as a well planted colony, but *strangers of the dispersion*, scattered to and fro; and *their dispersion* was partly, first by the *Assyrian* captivity, and after that by the *Babylonish*, and by the invasion of the *Romans*: and it might be in these very times increased by the believing *Jews* flying from the hatred and persecution that was raised againt them at home.

These places here mentioned, through which they were dispersed, are all in *Asia*. So *Asia* here is *Asia* the *lesser*. Where it is to be observed, that some of those who heard *St. Peter*[k], are said to be of those regions. And if any of those then converted were amongst these dispersed, the comfort was no doubt the more grateful from the hand of the same apostle by whom they were first converted; but this is only conjecture. Though divine truths are to be received equally from every minister alike, yet it must be acknowledged that there is something (we know not what to call it) of a more acceptable reception of those who at first were the means of bringing men to God, than of others; like the opinion some have of physicians whom they love.

The apostle comforts these strangers of this dispersion by the spiritual union which they obtained by *effectual calling*, and so calls off their eyes from their outwasd, dispersed and despised condition, to look above that, as high as the spring of their hap-

[i] Gal. ii. 9, 10. [k] Acts ii.

piness, the *free love* and *election* of God. *Scattered* in the countries, and yet gathered in God's election, chosen or pickt out; strangers to men amongst whom they dwelt, but *known* and *foreknown* to God; removed from their own country, to which men have naturally an unalterable affection, but made *heirs* of a better, as follows[l], and having within them the evidence both of eternal election, and that expected Salvation, the *Spirit* of *holiness*[m]. At the best a christian is but a stranger here, set him where you will, as our apostle teacheth after: And it is his privilege that he is so; and when he thinks not so, he forgets and disparages himself, and descends far below his quality, when he is much taken with any thing in this place of his exile.

But this is the wisdom of a christian, when he can solace himself against the meanness of his outward condition, and any kind of discomfort attending it, with the comfortable assurance of the love of God, that he hath called him to holiness, given him some measure of it, and an endeavour after more; and by this may he conclude, that he hath ordained him unto salvation. If either he is a stranger where he lives, or as a stranger deserted of his friends, and very neat stript of all outward comforts; yet may he rejoice in this, that the eternal unchangeable love of God that is from everlasting to everlasting, is sealed to his soul. And O! what will it avail a man to be compassed about with the favour of the world, to sit unmolested in his own home and possessions, and to have them very great and pleasant, to be well monied, and landed, and befriended, and yet estranged and sever'd from God, not having any token of his special love?

To the Elect.] The apostle here denominates all the christians to whom he writes, by the condition of true believers, calling them *elect* and *sanctified*, &c. And the apostle *St. Paul* writes in the same stile in his epistles to the churches: not that all in these churches were such indeed, but because they

[l] Acts ii. 3, 4. [m] verse 2.

professed to be such, and by that their profession and calling as christians, they were obliged to be such; and as many of them as were in any measure true to that their calling and profession, were really such. Besides, it would seem not unworthy of consideration, that in all probability there would be fewer false christians, and the number of true believers usually greater, in the churches in those primitive times, than now in the best reformed churches: Because there could not then be many of them that were from their infancy bred in the christian faith, but for the greatest part were such, as, being of years of discretion, were, by the hearing of the gospel, converted from *Paganism* and *Judaism* to the christian religion first, and made a deliberate choice of it, to which there were at that time no great outward encouragements; and therefore the less danger of multitudes of hypocrites, which, as vermin in summer, breed most in the time of the church's prosperity. Though no nation or kingdom had then universally received the faith, but rather hated and persecuted it; yet were there even then amongst them, as the writings of the apostles testify, false brethren, and inordinate walkers, and men of corrupt minds, earthly minded, and led with a spirit of envy and contention, and vain glory.

Although the question that is moved concerning the necessary qualifications of all the members of a true visible church, can no way (as I conceive) be decided from the inscriptions of the Epistles; yet certainly they are useful to teach christians and christian churches what they ought to be, and what their holy profession requires of them, and sharply to reprove the gross unlikeness and inconformity that is in the most part of men, to the description of christians. As there be some that are too strait in their judgment concerning the being and nature of the visible church, so certainly the greatest part of churces are too loose in their practice.

From the dissimilitude betwixt our churches and those, we may make this use of reproof, that if an

apostolical Epistle were to be directed to us, it ought to be inscribed, To the ignorant, profane, malicious, *&c.* as he, who at the hearing of the gospel read, said, "Either this is not the Gospel, or we are "not christians;" so either these characters, given in the inscription of these Epistles, are not true characters, or we are not true christians.

Ver. 2. *Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.*

In this verse we have their *condition*, and the causes of it. Their condition, *sanctified*, and *justified;* the former expressed by *obedience*, the latter by *sprinkling of the blood of Christ.* The causes, 1. *Eternal election.* 2. *The execution of that decree*, their *effectual calling*, which (I conceive) is meant by *election* here, the selecting them out of the world, and joining them to the fellowship of the children of God[n]. The former *election* is particularly ascribed to God the Father, the latter, to the Holy Spirit, and the *blood of Jesus Christ* the Son of God is here the cause of their *justification;* and so the whole Trinity concurring, dignify them with this their spiritual and happy estate.

First I shall discourse of these separately, and then of their connexion. 1. Of the state itself; and first of *justification*, though named last.

This *sprinkling* has respect to the rite of the legal purification by the sprinkling of blood, and that appositely; for these rites of sprinkling and blood did all point out this blood and this sprinkling, and exhibited this true ransom of souls, which was only shadowed by them.

As the use and end of sprinkling was *purification* and *expiation*, because sin merited death, and the pollutions and stains of human nature were by sin; such is the pollution, that it can be no manner

[n] John xv. 19.

of way washed off but by blood[o]. Neither is there any blood able to purge from sin, except the most precious blood of Jesus Christ, which is called the *blood of God*[p].

That the stain of sin can only be washed off by blood, intimates, that it merits death. And that no blood, but that of the Son of God, can do it, intimates, that this stain merits eternal death; and it had been our portion, except the death of the eternal Lord of life had freed us from it.

Filthiness needs sprinkling; *guiltiness* (such as deserves death) needs sprinkling of blood; and the death it deserves being everlasting death, the blood must be the blood of Christ, the eternal Lord of life, dying to free us from the sentence of death.

The soul (as the body) hath its life, its health, its purity; and the contrary of these, its death, diseases, deformities, and impurity, which belong to it as to their first subject, and to the body by participation.

The soul and body of all mankind is stained by the pollution of sin. The impure leprosy of the soul is not a spot outwardly, but wholly inward; hence as the corporal leprosy was purified by the sprinkling of blood, so is this. Then by reflecting, we see how all this that the Apostle St. *Peter* expresseth is necessary to justification. 1. Christ the Mediator betwixt God and man, is God and man. 2. A Mediator not only interceding, but also satisfying[q]. 3. This satisfaction doth not reconcile us, unless it be applied. Therefore there is not only mention of blood, but the *sprinkling* of it. The Spirit by faith sprinkleth the soul, as with hyssop, wherewith the sprinkling was made: this is it of which the Prophet speaks[b], *So shall he sprinkle many nations.* And which the Apostle to the *Hebrews* prefers above all legal sprinklings[c], both as to its duration, and as to the excellency of its effects.

[o] Heb. ix. 22. [p] Acts xx. 28. [q] Eph. ii. 16.
[b] Isa. lii. 15. [c] Chap. ix. 12, 13, 14.

Men are not easily convinced and persuaded of the deep stain of sin; and that no other laver can fetch it out, but the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Some that have moral resolutions of amendment, dislike at least gross sins, and purpose to avoid them, and it is to them cleanness enough to reform in those things; but they consider not what becomes of the guiltiness they have contracted already, and how that shall be purged, how their natural pollution shall be taken away. Be not deceived in this; it is not a transient sigh, or a light word, or a wish of, *God forgive me;* no, nor the highest current of repentance, nor that which is the truest evidence of repentance, amendment: it is none of these that purifies in the sight of God, and expiates wrath; they are all imperfect and stained themselves, cannot stand and answer for themselves, much less be of value to counterpoise the former guilt of sin; the very tears of the purest repentance, unless they be sprinkled with this blood, are impure; all our washings without this are but washings of the blackmoor, it is labour in vain[d]. There is none truly purged by the blood of Christ, that doth not endeavour after purity of heart and conversation; but yet it is the blood of Christ by which they are all fair, and there is no spot in them. Here it is said, *elect to obedience;* but because that obedience is not perfect, there must be sprinkling of the blood too. There is nothing in religion further out of nature's reach, and out of its liking and believing, than the doctrine of redemption by a Saviour, and a crucified Saviour, by Christ, and by his blood, first shed on the cross in his suffering, and then sprinkled on the soul by his Spirit. It is easier to make men sensible of the necessity of repentance and amendment of life, (though that is very difficult) than of this purging by the sprinkling of this precious blood. Did we see how needful Christ is to us, we would esteem and love him more.

It is not by the hearing of Christ, and of his blood

[d] Jer. ii. 22. Job ix. 30, 31.

in the doctrine of the gospel; it is not by the sprinkling of water, even that water that is the sign of this blood, without the blood itself, and the sprinkling of it. Many are present where it is sprinkled, and yet have no portion in it. Look to this, that this blood be sprinkled on your souls, that the destroying angel may pass by you. *There is a generation* (not some few, but a generation) deceived in this; they are their own deceivers, *pure in their own eyes*[e]. How earnestly doth *David* pray, *Wash me, purge me with hysop?* though bathed in tears[f], that satisfied not, *wash thou me.* This is the honourable condition of the saints, that they are purified and consecrated unto God by this sprinkling; yea, have on *long white robes washed in the blood of the Lamb.* There is mention indeed of *great tribulation*, but there is a double comfort joined with it. 1. They come out of it, that tribulation hath an end. And 2. They pass from that to glory; for they have on the robe of *candidates, long white robes washed in the blood of the Lamb*, washed white in blood; as for this blood, it is nothing but purity and spotlessness, being stained with no sin; and besides, hath that virtue to take away the stain of sin, where it is sprinkled. *My well-beloved is white and ruddy*, saith the spouse, thus in his death, ruddy by bloodshed, white by innocence, and purity of that blood.

Shall they then that are purged by this blood return to live among the swine, and tumble with them in the puddle? What gross injury is this to themselves, and to that blood by which they are cleansed? They that are chosen to this *sprinkling*, are likewise chosen to *obedience;* this blood purifieth the heart; yea, this blood *purgeth our consciences from dead works to serve the living God*[g].

2. Of their Sanctification, *elect unto obedience.*] It is easily understood to whom; when obedience to God is expressed by the simple absolute name of Obedience, it teacheth us, that to him alone belongs

[e] Prov. xxx. 12. [f] Psal. vi. 6. [g] Heb. ix. 14.

absolute and unlimited obedience, all obedience by all creatures. It is the shame and misery of man that he hath departed from this obedience, that we are become *sons of disobedience:* but grace renewing the hearts of believers, changeth their natures, and so their names, and makes them *children of obedience*, as afterwards in this chapter. As this obedience consists in the receiving Christ as our Redeemer, so also at the same time, as our Lord or king, an entire rendering up of the whole man to his obedience. This obedience then of the only begotten Jesus Christ, may well be understood not as *his actively*, as *Beza*, but *objectively*, as[h]. I think here it is contained, yea chiefly understood to signify that *obedience*, which the Apostle to the *Romans* calls the *obedience of faith*, by which the doctrine of Christ is received, and so Christ himself, which uniteth the believing soul to Christ; he sprinkles it with his blood to the remission of sin, and is the root and spring of all future obedience in the christian life.

By *obedience*, sanctification is here intimated: it signifies then, both habitual and active obedience, renovation of heart, and conformity to the divine will; the mind is illuminated by the Holy Ghost, to know and believe the divine will; yea, this faith is the great and chief part of obedience[i]. The truth of the doctrine is first impressed on the mind, hence flows out pleasant obedience, and full of love; hence all the affections, and the whole body, with its members, learn to give a willing obedience, and submit unto God; whereas before they resisted him, being under the standard of satan.

This obedience, though imperfect, yet hath a certain, (if I may so say) *imperfect perfection.* It is universal three manner of ways. 1. In the subject. 2. In the object. 3. In the duration, the whole man subjected to the whole law, and that constantly, and perseveringly.

The first universality is the cause of the other:

[h] 2 Cor. x. 5. [i] Rom. i. 8.

because it is not in the tongue alone, or in the hand, &c. but has its root in the heart; therefore it doth not wither as the grass, or flower lying on the superfice of the earth; but it flourishes, because rooted; and therefore it embraces the whole law, because it arises from a reverence it has for the law-giver himself. Reverence, I say, but tempered with love; hence it accounts no law nor command little, or of small value which is from God, because he is great, and highly esteemed by the pious heart. No command hard (though contrary to the flesh) because all things are easy to love; there is the same authority in all, as St. *James* divinely argues. And this authority is the golden chain of all the commandments, which if broke in any link, all falls to pieces.

That this threefold perfection of obedience is not a picture drawn by fancy, is evident in *David*[k], where he subjects himself to the whole law. His feet[l], his mouth[m], his heart[n], the whole tenor of his life[o]. He subjects himself to the whole law[p], and he professes his constancy therein[q], *Teach me the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end.*

2*dly*, We have the causes of the condition above described.

According to the foreknowledge of God the Father.] The exactest knowledge of things is, to know them in their causes; it is then an excellent thing, and worthy of their endeavours that are most desirous of knowledge, to know the best things in their highest causes, and the happiest way of attaining to this knowledge is, to possess those things, and to know them in experience: to such the Apostle here speaks, and sets before them the excellency of their spiritual condition, and leads them to the causes of it.

Their estate is, that they are *sanctified* and *justified:* the nearest cause of both these is *Jesus*

[k] Psal. cxix. [l] v. 105. [m] v. 13. [n] v. 11.
[o] v. 24. [p] v. 6. [q] v. 16. and 33.

Christ; he is made unto them both *righteousness and sanctification*, the sprinkling of his blood purifies them from guiltiness, and quickens them to obedience.

The appropriating or applying cause comes next under consideration, which is the *Holy*, and *holy making*, or *sanctifying Spirit*, the author of their selecting from the world, and effectual calling unto grace.

The source of all, the appointing, or decreeing cause, is *God the Father*; for though they all work equally in all, yet in order of working, we are taught thus to distinguish, and particularly to ascribe the first work of eternal election to the first person of the blessed Trinity.

In or *through sanctification.*] For to render it *elect to the sanctification* is strained: so then I conceive this election, is their effectual calling, which is by the working of the Holy Spirit[r], where *vocation* and *election* are used in the same sense, *Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh*, &c. *but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.* It is the first act of the decree of election; the beginning of its performance in those that are elected; and it is in itself a real separating of men from the profane and miserable condition of the world, and an appropriating and consecrating of a man unto God; and therefore, both in regard of its relation to election, and in regard of its own nature, it well bears that name[s].

Sanctification in a narrower sense, as distinguished from *justification*, signifieth the inherent holiness of a christian, or his being inclined and enabled to *obedience* mentioned in this verse: but it is here more large, and is co-extended with the whole work of renovation, and is the severing and separating of men to God, by his Holy Spirit, drawing them unto him; and so it comprehends justification (as here) and the

[r] 1 Cor. i. 26, 27, 28. [s] Rom. viii. 28. 30. Acts ii. 47. and xiii. 48. John xv. 19.

first working of faith, by which the soul is justified, through its apprehending, and applying the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Of the Spirit.] The word calls men externally, and by that external calling prevails with many to an external receiving and professing of religion, but if it be left alone it goes no further; it is indeed the means of sanctification and effectual calling[t], *Sanctify them through thy truth.* But this it doth when the Spirit that speaks in the word works in the heart, and causes it to hear and obey. The spirit or soul of a man is the chief and first subject of this work, and it is but slight false work that begins not there: but the *spirit* here, is rather to be taken for the Spirit of God the efficient, than the spirit of man the subject of this sanctification; and therefore our Saviour in that place prays to the Father, *that he would sanctify his own by that truth,* and this he doth by the concurrence of his spirit with that word of truth which is the life and vigour of it, and makes it prove *the power of God unto salvation to them that believe.* It is a fit means in itself, but it is then a prevailing means, when the Spirit of God brings it in to the heart; it is a sword, and *sharper than a two edged sword,* fit to divide, yea *even to the dividing of soul and Spirit.* But this it doth not, unless it be in the Spirit's hand, and he applies it to this cutting and dividing. The word calls, but the Spirit draws, not severed from that word, but working in it and by it.

It is a very difficult work to draw a soul out of the hands and strong chains of satan, and out of the pleasing entanglements of the world, and out of its own natural perverseness, to yield up itself unto God, to deny itself, and live to him; and in so doing, to run against the main stream, and the current of the ungodly world without, and corruption within.

The strongest rhetoric, the most moving and persuasive way of discourse, is all too weak; the tongue of men and angels cannot prevail with the

[t] John xvii. 17.

soul to free itself, and shake off all that detains it. Although it be convinced of the truth of those things that are represented to it, yet still it can and will hold out against it, and say, *non persuadebis etiamsi persuaseris.*

The hand of man is too weak to pluck any soul out of the crowd of the world, and set it in amongst the select number of believers. Only the Father of Spirits hath absolute command of Spirits, *viz.* the souls of men, to work on them as he pleaseth, and where he will. This powerful, this sanctifying Spirit knows no resistance, works sweetly, and yet strongly; it can come into the heart, whereas all other speakers are forced to stand without. That still voice within persuades more than all the loud crying without; as he that is within the house, though he speak low, is better heard and understood, than he that shouts without doors.

When the Lord himself speaks by this his Spirit to a man, selecting and calling him out of the lost world, he can no more disobey, than *Abraham* did, when the Lord spoke to him after an extraordinary manner, to depart from his own country and kindred[u]. *Abraham departed as the Lord had spoken to him.* There is a secret but very powerful virtue in a word, or look, or touch of this Spirit upon the soul, by which it is forced, not with a harsh but a pleasing violence, and cannot chuse but follow it, not unlike that of *Elijah*'s mantle upon *Elisha*[x]. How easily did the disciples forsake their callings and dwellings to follow Christ?

The Spirit of God draws a man out of the world by a sanctified light sent into his mind, discovering to him, 1. How base and false the sweetness of sin is, that withholds men and amuses them, that they return not, and how true and sad the bitterness is, that will follow upon it. 2. Setting before his eyes the free and happy condition, *the glorious liberty of the sons of God*, the riches of their present enjoyment, and their far larger and assured hopes for

[u] Gen. xii. 4. [x] 1 Kings xix. 19.

hereafter. 3. Making the beauty of Jesus Christ visible to the soul; which straight way takes it so, that it cannot be stayed from coming to him, though its most beloved friends, most beloved sins lye in the way, and hang about it and cry, Will you leave us so? It will tread upon all to come within the embraces of Jesus Christ, and say with St. *Paul, I was not disobedient to,* or *unpersuaded by the heavenly vision.*

It is no wonder that the godly are by some called singular and precise; they are so, *singular,* a few selected ones, pickt out by God's own hand for himself[y]. *Know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself: therefore,* saith our Saviour, *the world hates you, because I have chosen you out of the world.* For the world lies in unholiness and wickedness, is buried in it. And as living men can have no pleasure among the dead, neither can these elected ones amongst the ungodly; they walk in the world as warily as a man or woman, neatly apparelled, would do amongst a multitude that are all sullied and bemired.

Endeavour to have this sanctifying Spirit in yourselves; pray much for it; for his promise is past to us, that *he will give this holy Spirit to them that ask it.* And shall we be such fools as to want it, for want of asking? When we find heavy fetters on our souls and much weakness, yea averseness to follow the voice of God calling us to his obedience, then let us pray with the spouse, *draw me.* She cannot go nor stir without that drawing; and yet with it, not only goes, but runs, *we will run after thee.*

Think it not enough that you hear the word, and use the outward ordinances of God, and profess his name; for many are thus called, and yet but a few of them are chosen. There is but a small part of the world outwardly called, in comparison of the rest that is not so, and yet the number of the true elect is so small, that it gains the number of these

[y] Psal. iv. 3.

that are called, the name of *many*. They that are in the visible church, and partake of external vocation, are but like a large list of names (as in civil elections is usual) out of which a small number is chosen to the dignity of true christians, and invested into their privilege. Some men in nomination to offices or employments, think it a worse disappointment and disgrace to have been in the list, and yet not chosen, than if their names had not been mentioned at all. Certainly it is a greater unhappiness to have been *not far from the kingdom of God* (as our Saviour speaks) and miss of it, than still to have remained in the furthest distance; to have been at the mouth of the haven (the *fair havens* indeed) and yet driven back and shipwrecked. Your labour is most preposterous, you seek to ascertain and make sure things that cannot be made sure, and that which is both more worth, and may be made surer than them all, you will not endeavour to make sure. Hearken to the Apostle's advice, and at length set about this in earnest, to *make your calling and election sure;* make sure this election, as it is here, (for that is the order) your effectual calling sure, and that will bring with it assurance of the other, the eternal election and love of God towards you, which follows to be considered.

According to the foreknowledge of God the Father.] *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning*, saith the Apostle *James*[z]. He sees all things from the beginning of time to the end of it, and beyond to all eternity, and from all eternity he did foresee them. But this foreknowledge here, is peculiar to the elect, *Verba sensus in sacra scriptura denotant affectus*, as the Rabbins remark; so in man[a], *If I see iniquity;* and in God[b], *For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous*, &c[c]. *You only have I known of all the families of the earth*, &c. And in that speech of our Saviour, relating it as the terrible doom of reprobates at the last day, *Depart*, &c. *I know you not, I never knew you;*

[z] Acts xv. 18. [a] Psal. lxvi. [b] Psal. i. ult. [c] Amos iii. 2.

so St. *Paul*[d], *For that which I do, I allow* [Gr. *know*] *not.* And *Beza* observes that γινώσκω is by the *Greeks* sometimes taken for *decernere, judicare;* thus some speak, to *cognosce* upon a business. So then this *foreknowledge* is no other, but that eternal love of God, or decree of election, by which some are appointed unto life, and being foreknown or elected to that end, they are predestinate to the way to it[e]. *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren.*

It is most vain to imagine a foresight of faith in men, and that God in the view of that, as the condition of election itself, as it is called, has chosen them: for, 1. Nothing at all is *futurum*, or can have that imagined *futurition*, but *as* it is, and *because* it is decreed by God to be; and therefore, (as says the Apostle St. *James*, in the passage before cited) *Known unto God are all his works*, because his *works* in time were his *purpose* from eternity. 2. It is most absurd to give any reason of divine will without himself. 3. This easily solves all that difficulty that the Apostle speaks of; and yet he never thought of such a solution, but runs high for an answer, not to satisfy cavilling reason, but to silence it, and stop its mouth: for thus the Apostle argues[f], *Thou wilt say then unto me, why doth he yet find fault; for who hath resisted his will? Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?* Who can conceive whence this should be, that any man should believe unless it be given him of God; and if given him, then it was his purpose to give it him; and if so, then it is evident that he had a purpose to save him; and for that end he gives faith, not therefore purposes to save, because man shall believe. 4. This seems cross to these scriptures, where they speak of the subordination, or rather co-ordination of those two, as here, *foreknown* and *elect*, not *because* of obedience, or sprinkling,

[d] Rom. vii. 15. [e] Rom. viii. 29. [f] Rom. ix. 19, 20.

or any such thing, but *to obedience and sprinkling*, which is by faith. So he predestinated, not because he foresaw men would be conform to Christ, but that they might be so[g]. *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate:* and the same order[h], *And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved*[i]. *And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.*

This foreknowledge then, is his eternal and unchangeable love; and that thus he chuseth some, and rejecteth others, is for that great end, to manifest and magnify his mercy and justice: but why he appointed this man for the one, and the other for the other, made *Peter* a vessel of this mercy, and *Judas* of wrath, this is even so, because it seemed good to him. This if it be harsh, yet is Apostolic doctrine. *Hath not the potter* (saith St. *Paul*) *power over the same lump, to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?* This deep we must admire, and always in considering it, close with this, *O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!*

Now the connexion of these, we are for our profit to take notice of, that *effectual calling* is inseparably tied to this eternal *foreknowledge* or *election* on the one side, and *salvation* on the other. These two links of the chain are up in Heaven in God's own hand; but this middle one, is let down to earth, into the hearts of his children, and they laying hold on it, have sure hold on the other two, for no power can sever them; if therefore they can read the characters of God's image in their own souls, those are the counter-part of the golden characters of his love, in which their names are written in the book of life. Their believing writes their names under the promises of the revealed book of life, the scriptures; and so ascertains them, that the same names are in the secret book of life that God hath by himself from eternity. So finding the stream of grace in their hearts, though they see not the foun-

[g] Rom. viii. 29. [h] Act. ii. 47. [i] And xiii. 48.

tain whence it flows, nor the ocean into which it returns, yet they know that it hath its source, and shall return to that ocean which ariseth from their eternal election, and shall empty itself into that eternity of happiness and salvation.

Hence much joy ariseth to the believer; this tye is indissolvable, as the agents are, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit: so are *election*, and *vocation*, and *sanctification*, and *justification* and *glory*. Therefore in all conditions believers may, from the sense of the working of the Spirit in them, look back to that election, and forward to that salvation: but they that remain unholy and disobedient, have as yet no evidence of this love; and therefore cannot, without vain presumptions and self-delusion judge thus of themselves, that they are within the peculiar love of God: but in this, *let the righteous be glad, and let them shout for joy all that are upright in heart.*

It is one main point of happiness, that he that is happy doth know, and judge himself to be so; this being the peculiar good of a reasonable creature, it is to be enjoyed in a reasonable way; it is not as the dull resting of a stone, or any other natural body in its natural place; but the knowledge and consideration of it, is the fruition of it, the very relishing and tasting its sweetness.

The perfect blessedness of the Saints is waiting them above: but even their present condition is truly happy, though incompleatly, and but a small beginning of that which they expect; and this their present happiness is so much the greater, the more clear knowledge and firm persuasion they have of it. It is one of the pleasant fruits of the godly, *to know the things that are freely given them of God*[k]. Therefore the Apostle, to comfort his dispersed brethren, sets before them a description of that excellent spiritual condition to which they are called.

If *election*, *effectual calling* and *salvation* be in-

[k] 1 Cor. ii. 12.

separably linked together; then by any one of them a man may lay hold upon all the rest, and may know that his hold is sure, and this is that way wherein we may attain, and ought to seek that comfortable assurance of the love of God. Therefore, *make your calling sure*, and by that *your election*; for that being done, this follows of itself. We are not to pry immediately into the decree, but to read it in the performance. Though the mariner sees not the *pole-star*, yet the needle of the compass that points to it, tells him which way he sails: thus the heart, that is touched with the loadstone of divine love, trembling with godly fear, and yet still looking towards God by fixed believing, points at the love of election, and tells the soul that its course is Heavenward, towards the haven of eternal rest. He that loves, may be sure he was loved first; and he that chuses God for his delight and portion, may conclude confidently, that God hath chosen him to be one of those that shall enjoy him, and be happy in him for ever; for that our love, and electing of him, is but the return and repercussion of the beams of his love shining upon us.

Find thou but within thee sanctification by the Spirit, and this argues necessarily, both justification by the Son, and the election of God the Father[1]. *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.* It is a most strange demonstration, *ab effectu reciproco*, he called those he hath elected; he elected those he called. Where this sanctifying Spirit is not, there can be no persuasion of this eternal love of God; they that are *children of disobedience*, can conclude no otherwise of themselves but that they are the *children of wrath*. Although from present unsanctification, a man cannot infer that he is not *elected*, for the decree may for part of a man's life run (as it were) under-ground; yet this is sure, that that estate leads to death, and unless it be broken, will

[1] 1 John iv. 13.

prove the black line of reprobation. A man hath no portion amongst the children of God, nor can read one word of comfort in all the promises that belong to them, while he remains unholy. Men may please themselves in profane scoffing at the holy Spirit of grace, but let them withal know this, that that holy Spirit they mock and despise, is that Spirit *that seals men to the day of redemption*[m].

If any pretend they have the Spirit, and so turn away from the straight rule of the holy scriptures, they have a spirit indeed, but it is a fanatical Spirit, the spirit of delusion and giddiness: but the Spirit of God that leads his children in the way of truth, and is for that purpose sent them from Heaven to guide them thither, squares their thoughts and ways to that rule, whereof it is author, and that word, which was inspired by it, and sanctifies them to obedience; *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him*[n].

Now this Spirit that sanctifieth, and sanctifieth to obedience, is within us the evidence of our election, and earnest of our salvation. And whoso are not sanctified and led by this Spirit, the Apostle tells us what is their condition[o]. *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

Let us not delude ourselves; this is a truth, if there be any in religion, they that are not made Saints in the estate of grace, shall never be Saints in glory.

The stones that are appointed for that glorious temple above, are hewn and polished and prepared for it here; as the stones were wrought and prepared in the mountains for building the temple at *Jerusalem.*

This is God's order[p]. He gives *grace* and *glory*; as moralists can tell us, that the way to the temple of honour is through the temple of virtue. They that think they are bound for Heaven in the ways of sin, have either found a new way untroden by

[m] Eph. iv. 30. [n] 1 John ii. 4. [o] Rom. viii. 9. [p] Psal. lxxxiv. 12.

all that are gone thither, or will find themselves deceived in the end. We need not then that poor shift for the pressing of holiness, and obedience upon men, to represent it to them as the meriting cause of salvation. This is not at all to the purpose, seeing without it the necessity of holiness to salvation is pressing enough; for holiness is no less necessary to salvation, than if it were the meriting cause of it, it is as inseparably tied to it in the purpose of God. And in the order of performance, godliness is as certainly before salvation, as if salvation did wholly and altogether depend upon it, and were in point of justice deserved by it. Seeing then there is no other way to happiness but by holiness, no assurance of the love of God without it, take the Apostle's advice, study it, seek it, follow earnestly after holiness, *without which no man shall see the Lord.*

Grace unto you and peace be multiplied.] It hath always been a civil custom amongst men, to season their intercourse with good wishes one for another; this the Apostles use in their epistles, in a spiritual divine way, suitable to their holy writings. It well becomes the messengers of *grace* and *peace* to wish both, and to make their salutation conform to the main scope and subject of their discourse. The *Hebrew* word of salutation we have here; *peace;* and that which is the spring both of this and all good things, in the other word of salutation used by the *Greeks, grace.* All right rejoicing, and prosperity, and happiness, flows from this source, and from this alone, and is sought elsewhere in vain.

In general, this is the character of a christian Spirit, to have a heart filled with *blessing*, with this sweet good-will and good-wishing to all, especially to those that are their brethren in the same profession of religion. And this charity is a precious balm, diffusing itself in the wise and seasonable expressions of it, upon fit occasions; and those expressions must be cordial and sincere, not like that you call *court holy-water*, in which there is nothing else but fals-

hood, or vanity at the best. This manifests men to be the sons of blessing, and of the ever-blessed God, the Father of all blessing, when in his name they bless one another: yea, our Saviour's rule goes higher, to *bless those that curse them*, and urges it by that relation to God as their Father, that in this they may resemble him, *that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven.*

But in a more eminent way, it is the duty of pastors to bless their people, not only by their public and solemn benediction, but by daily and instant prayers for them in secret. And the great *Father who seeth in secret will reward them openly.*

They are to be ever both endeavouring and wishing their increase of knowledge and all spiritual grace, in which they have St. *Paul* a frequent pattern.

They that are messengers of this *grace*, if they have experience of it, it is the oil of gladness that will dilate their heart, and make it large in love and spiritual desires for others, especially their own flocks.

Let us, 1. consider the matter of the Apostle's desire for them, *grace and peace.* 2. The measure of it, that it may *be multiplied.*

1*st*. The matter of the Apostle's desire, *grace.* We need not make a noise with the many school-distinctions of *grace*, and describe in what sense it is here to be taken; for no doubt it is all *saving grace* to those dispersed brethren, so that in the largest notion that it can have that way, we may safely here take it.

What are *preventing grace, assisting grace, working* and *co-working grace*, (as we may admit these differences in a sound sense) but divers names of the same effectual saving grace, in relation to our different estate? as the same sea receives different names from the different parts of the shore it beats upon. First it prevents and works; then it assists and prosecutes what it hath wrought, *He worketh in us to will and to do.* But the whole sense of saving

grace, I conceive, is comprehended in these two. 1. Grace in the fountain, that is the peculiar love and favour of God. 2. In the streams, the fruits of this love, (for it is not an empty, but a most rich and liberal love) *viz.* all the graces and spiritual blessings of God bestowed upon them, whom he hath freely chosen. The love of God in itself can neither diminish nor increase, but it is multiplied, or abounds in the manifestation and effects of it; so then, to desire grace to be multiplied to them, is to wish to them the living spring of it, that love that cannot be exhausted, but is ever flowing forth, and instead of abating, makes each day richer than another.

And this is that which should be the top and sum of christian desires, to have, or want any other thing indifferently; but to be resolved and resolute in this, to seek a share in this grace, the free love of God, and the sure evidences of it within you, the fruit of holiness, and the graces of his Spirit. But the most of us are otherwise taken up: we will not be convinced, how basely and foolishly we are busied, though in the best and most respected employments of the world, so long as we neglect our noblest trade of growing rich in grace, and the comfortable enjoyment of the love of God. Our Saviour tells us of *one thing needful*, importing that all other things are comparatively unnecessary, bye-works, and mere impertinencies; and yet in these we lavish out our short and uncertain time, we let the other stand by till we find leisure. Men who are altogether profane think not on it at all; some others possibly deceive themselves thus, and say, when I have done with such a business in which I am engaged, then I will sit down seriously to this, and bestow more time and pains on these things that are undeniably greater and better, and more worthy of it. But this is a slight that is in danger to undo us: what if we attain not to the end of that business, but end ourselves before it; or if we do not, yet some other business may step in after that.

Oh then! say we, that must be dispatched also. Thus, by such delays, we may lose the present opportunity, and in the end our own souls.

Oh! be persuaded it deserves your diligence, and that without delay, to seek somewhat that may be constant enough to abide with you, and strong enough to uphold you in all conditions, and that is alone this free grace and love of God. While many say, *Who will shew us any good?* set you in with *David* in his choice, *Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me, and this shall rejoice my heart more than the abundance of corn and wine*[q].

This is that light that can break into the darkest dungeons, from which all other lights and comforts are shut out, and without this, all other enjoyments are, what the world would be, without the sun, nothing but darkness. Happy they who have this light of divine favour and grace shining into their souls; for by it they shall be led to that city, where the sun and moon are needless; for *the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof*[r].

Godliness is profitable for all things, saith the Apostle, *having the promises of this life, and that which is to come;* all other blessings are the attendants of grace, and follow upon it. This blessing that the Apostle here (and also St. *Paul* in his Epistles) joins with grace, was with the *Jews* of so large a sense, as to comprehend all that they could desire, when they wished peace, they meant all kind of good, all welfare and prosperity. And thus we may take it here, for all kind of peace; yea, and for all other blessings, but especially that spiritual peace, which is the proper fruit of grace, and doth so intrinsically flow from it.

We may and ought to wish to the church of God outward blessings, and particularly outward peace, as one of the greatest, so one of the most valuable favours of God: thus prayed the Psalmist[s], *Peace*

[q] Psal. iv. 6, 7. [r] Rev. xxi. 23. [s] Psal. cxxii. 7.

be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.

But that wisdom that doth what he will, by what means he will, and works one contrariety out of another, brings light out of darkness, good out of evils, can and doth turn tears and troubles to the advantage of his church; but certainly in itself, peace is more suitable to its increase, and if not abused, proves so too. As in the Apostolic times, it is said, *the church had peace, and increased exceedingly*[t]. We ought also to wish for ecclesiastical peace to the church, that she may be free from dissensions and divisions.

These readily arise more or less, (as we see in all times) and haunt religion, and the reformation of it, as a *malus genius*. St. *Paul* had this to say to his *Corinthians*[u], though he had given them this testimony, that they were enriched in all utterance and knowledge, and were wanting in no gift; yet presently after[x], *I hear that there are divisions and contentions among you. The enemy had done this*, as our Saviour speaks; and this enemy is no fool, for, by divine permission, he works to his own end very wisely: for there is not one thing that doth on all hands choak the seed of religion so much, as thorny debates and differences about itself. So in succeeding ages, and at the breaking forth of the light in *Germany* in *Luther*'s time, multitudes of sects arose.

Profane men do not only stumble, but fall and break their necks upon these divisions. We see (think they, and some of them possibly say it out) that they who mind religion most, cannot agree upon it, our easiest way is, not to embroil ourselves, not at all to be troubled with the business. Many are of *Gallio*'s temper, they *will care for none of those things*. Thus these offences prove a mischief to the profane world, as our Saviour says, *Woe to the world because of offences.*

Then, the erring side, that is taken with new

[t] Acts ix. 31. [u] Chap. i. v. 5. [x] v. 13.

opinions and fancies, are altogether taken up with them, their main thoughts spent upon them; and thus the sap is drawn from that which should nourish and prosper in their hearts, *sanctified useful knowledge*, and *saving grace*. The other are as weeds, that divert the nourishment in gardens from the plants and flowers: and certainly these weeds, *viz.* men's own conceits, cannot but grow more with them, when they give way to them, than solid religion doth; for their hearts (as one said of the earth) are mother to those, and but step-mother to this.

It is also a loss even to those that oppose errors and divisions, that they are forced to be busied that way: for the wisest and godliest of them find (and such are sensible of it) that disputes in religion are no friends to that which is far sweeter in it; but hinders and abates it, *viz.* these pious and devout thoughts, that are both the more useful, and truly delightful.

As peace is a choice blessing, so this is the choicest peace, and is the peculiar inseparable effect of this grace, with which it is here jointly wished, *grace* and *peace;* the flower of peace growing upon the root of grace. This spiritual peace hath two things in it. 1. Reconciliation with God. 2. Tranquillity of Spirit. The quarrel and matter of enmity you know, betwixt God and man is the rebellion, the sin of man; and he being naturally altogether sinful, there can proceed nothing from him, but what foments and increases the hostility. It is grace alone, the most free grace of God, that contrives, and offers, and makes the peace, else it had never been; we had universally perished without it. Now in this is the wonder of divine grace, that the Almighty God seeks agreement, and entreats for it, with sinful clay, which he could wholly destroy in a moment.

Jesus Christ the Mediator and purchaser of this peace, bought it with his blood, killed the enmity

by his own death[y]. And therefore the tenor of it in the gospel runs still in his name[z], *We have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord*; and St. *Paul* expresses it in his salutations, that are the same with this, *Grace and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ.*

As the free love, and grace of God appointed this means and way of our peace, and offered it; so the same grace applies it, and makes it ours, and gives us faith to apprehend it.

And from our sense of this peace, or reconcilement with God, arises that which is our inward peace, a calm and quiet temper of mind. This peace that we have with God in Christ, is inviolable: but because the sense and persuasion of it may be interrupted, the soul that is truly at peace with God, may for a time be disquieted in itself, through weakness of faith, or the strength of temptation, or the darkness of desertion, losing sight of that grace, that love and light of God's countenance, on which its tranquillity and joy depends, *Thou hidest thy face,* saith *David, and I was troubled.* But when these eclipses are over, the soul is revived with new consolation, as the face of the earth is renewed, and made to smile with the return of the sun in the spring; and this ought always to uphold christians in the saddest times, *viz.* that the grace, and love of God towards them, depends not on their sense, nor upon any thing in them, but is still in itself incapable of the smallest alteration.

It is natural to men to desire their own peace, the quietness and contentment of their minds: but most men miss the way to it; and therefore find it not; for there is no way to it indeed, but this one, wherein few seek it, *viz.* reconcilement and peace with God. The persuasion of that alone makes the mind clear and serene, like your fairest summer days, *My peace I give you,* saith Christ, *not as the world. Let not your hearts be troubled.* All

[y] Eph. ii. 15. [z] Rom. v. 1.

the peace and favour of the world cannot calm a troubled heart; but where this peace is that Christ gives, all the trouble and disquiet of the world cannot disturb it, *When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only.* See also for this[a]. All outward distress to a mind thus at peace, is but as the rattling of the hail upon the tiles, to him that sits within the house at a sumptuous feast. A good conscience is called so, and with an advantage that no other feast can have, nor could men endure it. A few hours of feasting will weary the most profest epicure; but a conscience thus at peace is a *continual feast*, with continual unwearied delight. What makes the world take up such a prejudice against religion, as a sour unpleasant thing? They see the afflictions and griefs of christians; but they do not see their joys, the inward pleasure of mind that they can possess in a very hard estate. Have you not tried other ways enough? Hath not he tried them that had more ability and skill for it than you, and found them not only *vanity*, but *vexation of Spirit?* If you have any belief of holy truth, put but this once upon the trial, seek peace in the way of grace. This inward peace is too precious a liquor to be poured into a filthy vessel. A holy heart, that gladly entertains grace, shall find, that it and peace cannot dwell asunder.

An ungodly man may sleep to death in the lethargy of carnal presumption and impenitency; but a true lively solid peace he cannot have. *There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God*[b]. And if he say there is none; speak peace who will, if all the world with one voice would speak it, it shall prove none.

2*dly*. Consider the *measure* of the Apostle's desire for his scattered brethren, that this *grace* and *peace* may be *multiplied*. This the Apostle wishes for them, knowing the imperfection of the graces, and

[a] Psal. xlvi. cxxiii. [b] Isa. lvii. 21.

peace of the Saints while they are here below; and this they themselves, in sense of that imperfection, ardently desire. They that have tasted the sweetness of this grace and peace call incessantly for more. This is a disease in earthly desires, and a disease incurable by all these things desired; there is no satisfaction attainable by them: but this avarice of spiritual things is a virtue, and by our Saviour is called *blessedness*, because it tends to fulness and satisfaction. *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled*[c].

Ver. 3. *Blessed be the God, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*

Ver. 4. *To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.*

It is a cold lifeless thing to speak of spiritual things upon mere report: but they that speak of them, as their own, as having share and interest in them, and some experience of their sweetness, their discourse of them is enlivened with firm belief, and ardent affection; they cannot mention them, but their hearts are straight taken with such gladness, as they are forced to vent in praises. Thus our Apostle here, and St. *Paul*[d], and often elsewhere, when they considered these things wherewith they were about to comfort the Godly, to whom they wrote, they were suddenly elevated with the joy of them, and broke forth into thanksgiving; so teaching us by their example, what real joy there is in the consolations of the Gospel, and what praise is due from all the Saints to the God of those consolations. This is such an inheritance that the very thoughts and hopes of it are able to sweeten the greatest griefs and afflictions. What then shall the possession of it be, wherein there

[c] Mat. v. 6. [d] Eph. i.

shall be no rupture, nor the least drop of any grief at all? The main subject of these verses is, that which is the main comfort that supports the spirits of the Godly in all conditions.

1. Their *after inheritance* in the 4th ver. *2dly*, Their *present title* to it, and *assured hope* of it, ver. 3. *3dly*, The *immediate cause* of both assigned, *viz. Jesus Christ.* *4thly*, All this derived from the *free mercy of God*, as the first and highest cause, and returned to his praise and glory as the last and highest end of it.

For the *first*. The *inheritance*.] But because the fourth verse which describes it, is linked with the subsequent, we will not go so far off to return back again, but first speak to this third verse, and in it.]

Consider 1. Their *title* to this *inheritance*, *Begotten again*. 2. Their *assurance* of it, *viz. A holy or lively hope.*

The *title* that the Saints have to their rich inheritance is of the validest, and most unquestionable kind, *viz.* by birth. Not by their first natural birth: by it we are all born to an inheritance indeed; but we find what it is[e], *Children of wrath*, heirs apparent of eternal flames. It is an everlasting inheritance too, but so much the more fearful, being of everlasting misery, or (so to speak) of immortal death, and we are made sure to it, they who remain in that condition cannot lose their right, although they gladly would escape it, they shall be forced to enter possession. But it is by a new and supernatural birth, that men are both freed from their engagement to that woeful inheritance, and invested into the rights of this other here mentioned, as full of happiness as the former is miserable: therefore are they said here to be begotten again to that lively hope. God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath begotten us again. And thus are the regenerate, the children of an immortal Father, and so entitled to an inheritance of immortality, *If children, then heirs, heirs of God.*

[e] Eph. ii. 3.

This sonship is by adoption in Christ, therefore it is added, *Joint heirs with Christ*[f]. We adopted, and he the only begotten Son of God, by an eternal ineffable generation.

And yet this our adoption is not a mere extrinsical denomination, as is adoption amongst men; but accompanied with a real change in those that are adopted, a new nature, and Spirit infused into them, by reason of which, as they are adopted to this their inheritance in Christ, they are likewise begotten of God, and born again to it, by the supernatural work of regeneration. They are like their heavenly Father, they have his image renewed on their souls, and their Father's Spirit. They have, and are acted, and led by it. This is that great mystery of the kingdom of God, that puzzled *Nicodemus*, it was darkness to him at first, till he was instructed in that night, under the covert whereof he came to Christ.

Nature cannot conceive of any generation or birth, but that which is within its own compass; only they that are partakers of this spiritual birth, understand what it means; to others it is a riddle, an unsavoury unpleasant subject.

It is sometimes ascribed to the subordinate means, to baptism, called therefore the *laver of regeneration*[g]. To the word of God[h]. It is that immortal seed, whereby we are born again, by the ministry of this word, and the seals of it, as[i], *For though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many Fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel.* As also[k]: But all those have their vigour and efficacy in this great work, from the Father of Spirits, who is their Father in their first creation, and infusion, and in this their regeneration, which is a new and second creation[l], *If any man be in Christ he is a new creature.*

Divines have reason to infer from the nature of

[f] Rom. viii. 17. [g] Tit. iii. 5. [h] Jam. i. 18. [i] 1 Cor. iv. 15. [k] Gal. iv. 19. [l] 2 Cor. v. 17.

conversion thus expressed, that man doth not bring any thing to this work himself. It is true he hath a will, as his natural faculty; but that this will embraces the offer of grace, and turns to him that offers it, is from renewing grace, that sweetly, and yet strongly; strongly, and yet sweetly, inclines it.

1. Nature cannot raise itself to this, more than a man can give natural being to himself. 2. It is not a superficial change, it is a new life and being. A moral man in his changes and reformations of himself, is still the same man. Though he reform so far, as men, in their ordinary phrase call him, *quite another man*; yet in truth, till he be born again, there is no new nature in him. *The sluggard turns on his bed as the door on the hinges*, says *Solomon*. Thus the natural man turns from one custom and posture to another, but never turns off; But the christian by virtue of this *new birth*, can say indeed, *ego non sum ego*, I am not the same man I was.

You that are nobles, aspire to this honourable condition, add this nobleness to the other, for it far surpasses it; make it the crown of all your honours and advantages. And you that are of mean birth, or if you have any stain in your birth, the only way to make up and repair all, and truly to ennoble you, is this, to be the sons of a King, yea of the King of Kings, and *this honour have all his Saints. To as many as received him, he gave this privilege to be the Sons of God.*

Unto a lively hope.] *Now are we the Sons of God*, (saith the Apostle[m].) *But it doth not yet appear what we shall be.* These Sons are heirs; but all this lifetime is their minority; yet even then being partakers of this new birth and Sonship, they have right to it, and in the assurance of that right, this *living hope*; as an heir when he is capable of those thoughts, hath not only right of inheritance; but may rejoice in the hope he hath of it, and please himself in thinking of it. But hope is said

[m] 1 Joh. iii. 2.

to be only of an uncertain good: true, in the world's phrase it is so: for their hope is conversant in uncertain things, or in things that may be certain, after an uncertain manner, all their worldly hopes are tottering, built upon sand, and their hopes of Heaven are but blind, and groundless conjectures; but the hope of the Sons of the Living God, is a living hope. That which *Alexander* said when he dealt liberally about him, that he *left hope to himself*, the children of God may more wisely and happily say, when they leave the hot pursuit of the world to others, and despise it, their portion is hope. The thread of *Alexander*'s life was cut off in the midst of his victories, and so all his hopes vanished; but their hope cannot die, nor disappoint them.

But then it is said to be *lively*, not only *objectively*, but *effectively*, enlivening and comforting the children of God in all distresses, enabling them to encounter and surmount all difficulties in the way. And then it is formally so, it cannot fail, dies not before accomplishment. Worldly hopes often mock men, and so cause them to be ashamed, and men take it as a great blot, and are most of all ashamed of those things that discover weakness of judgment in them. Now worldly hopes do thus, they put the fool upon a man: when he hath judged himself sure, and laid so much weight and expectation on them, then they break, and foil him; they are not living, but lying hopes, and dying hopes; they die often before us, and we live to bury them, and see our own folly and infelicity in trusting to them; but at the utmost, they die with us when we die, and can accompany us no further. But this hope answers expectation to the full, and much beyond it, and deceives no way, but in that happy way, of far exceeding it.

A *living hope*, living in death itself. The world dare say no more for its device, but *dum spiro spero*; but the children of God can add, by virtue of this living hope, *dum exspiro spero*. It is a fearful thing when a man and all his hopes die

together. Thus saith *Solomon* of the wicked[n], When he dieth, *then die his hopes*, (many of them *before*, but at the utmost *then* all of them) but *the righteous hath hope in his death*[o]. Death alone that cuts the sinews of all other hopes, and turns men out of all other inheritances, fulfils this hope, and ends it in fruition; as a messenger sent to bring the children of God home to the possession of their inheritance.

By the resurrection of Christ from the dead.] This refers to both *begotten again* by his resurrection, and having this *living hope* by his resurrection; and well suits both, it being the proper cause of both, in this order. First then of the *birth*; next of the *hope*.

The image of God is renewed in us by our union with him, who is *the express image of his Father's person*[p]. Therefore this new birth in the conception is expressed by the *forming of Christ in the soul*[q], and resurrection particularly is assigned as the cause of our new life; this new birth is called our *resurrection*, and that in conformity to Christ, yea by the virtue and influence of his. His resurrection is called a *birth*, he the first begotten from the dead[r]. And that prophecy[s], *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*, is applied to his resurrection as fulfilled in it[t]. *God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* Not only is it the exemplar, but the efficient cause of our new birth. Thus[u], at large, and often elsewhere.

And thus likewise it is the cause of our *living hope*, that which indeed inspires and maintains life in it, because he hath conquered death, and is risen again; and that is implied which followeth, he is *set down at the right hand of God*, hath entered into possession of that inheritance: this gives us a

[n] Prov. xi. 7. [o] Prov. xiv. 32. [p] Heb. i. 3. [q] Gal. iv. 19.
[r] Rev. i. 5. [s] Psal. ii. 7. [t] Act. xiii. 33. [u] Rom. vi.

living hope, that according to his own request, *where he is, there we may be also.* Thus this hope is strongly underset, on the one side by the resurrection of Christ, on the other by the abundant mercy of God the Father. Our hope depends not on our own strength or wisdom, nor on any thing in us; for if it did, it would be short-lived, would die, and die quickly, but on his resurrection who can die no more: for *in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God*[x]. This makes this hope not to imply, in the notion of it, uncertainty, as worldly hopes do; but it is a firm, stable, inviolable hope, *an anchor fixed within the vail.*

According to his abundant mercy.] Mercy is the spring of all this; yea, great mercy, and manifold mercy: "for (as St. *Bernard* saith) great sins and "great miseries need great mercy, and many sins "and miseries need many mercies." And is not this great mercy, to make of satan's slaves, Sons of the most High? Well may the Apostle say, *Behold what manner of love, and how great love the Father hath shewed us, that we should be called the Sons of God. The world knows us not, because it knew not him.* They that have not seen the Father of a child, cannot know its resembling him. Now the world knows not God, and therefore discerns not his image in his children so as to esteem them for it. But whatever be their opinion, this we must say ourselves, Behold what manner of love is this, to take fire-brands of hell, and to appoint them to be one day brighter than the sun in the firmament; to *raise the poor out of the dunghill, and set them with princes*[y].

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.] Lastly, we see it stirs up the Apostle to praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the stile of the Gospel, as formerly under the law, the God of *Abraham, Isaac* and *Jacob*, and the God that brought thee up out of the land

[x] Rom. vi. 10. [y] Psal. cxiii. 7, 8.

of *Egypt*, &c. This now is the order of the government of grace, that it holds first with Christ our Head, and in him with us; so he says, *I go to my Father, and your Father, and my God, and your God.* Which, as St. *Cyril* of *Jerusalem* in his catechism observes, shows us not only our communion with him, that, might have been expressed thus, I go to my God and Father, but the order of the covenant, first my Father, and my God, and then yours. Thus ought we, in our consideration of the mercies of God, still to take in Christ, for in him they are conveyed to us. Thus[z], *With all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.*

Blessed.] He blesseth us really, *benefaciendo benedicit.* We bless Him, by acknowledging his goodness, and this we ought to do at all times[a]. *I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth.* All this is far below Him and his mercies. What are our lame praises in comparison of his love? Nothing, and less than nothing; but love will stammer rather than be dumb. They that are amongst his children, *begotten again*, have, in the resurrection of Christ, a lively hope of glory, as it is[b], *Which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.* This leads them to observe and admire that rich mercy whence it flows; and this consideration awakes them, and strains them to break forth into praises.

To an inheritance incorruptible.] *As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart*[c].

Worldly mirth is so far from curing spiritual grief, that even worldly grief, where it is great, and takes deep root, is not allayed but increased by it. A man that is full of inward heaviness, the more he is compassed about with mirth, it exasperates and enrages his grief the more; like ineffectual weak physic, that removes not the humour, but stirs it, and makes it more unquiet: but spiritual joy is season-

[z] Eph. i. 3. [a] Psal. xxxiv. 1. [b] Col. i. 27. [c] Prov. xxv. 20.

able for all estates; in prosperity it is pertinent to crown and sanctify all other enjoyments, with this that so far surpasses them; and in distress it is the only *Nepenthe*, the cordial of fainting spirits: so[d], *He hath put joy into my heart.* This mirth makes way for itself, which other mirth cannot do; these songs are sweetest in the night of distress. Therefore the Apostle, writing to his scattered afflicted brethren, begins his Epistle with this song of praise, *Blessed be the God and Father*, &c.

The matter of it is, the joyful remembrance of the happiness laid up for them, under the name of *inheritance.* Now this inheritance is described by the singular qualities of it. They contain, 1. The excellency of its nature. 2. The certainty of its attainment. The former in these three, *incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away;* the latter in the last words of this verse, and in the following, *reserved in Heaven for you*, &c.

God is bountiful to all, gives to all men all that they have, health, riches, honour, strength, beauty and wit; but those things he scatters (as it were) with an indifferent hand. Upon others he looks, as well as on his beloved children; but the *inheritance* is peculiarly theirs. Inheritance is convertible with Sonship: for[e], *Abraham* gave gifts to *Keturah*'s sons, and dismissed them; but the inheritance was for the Son of the promise. When we see a man rising in preferment, estate, or admired for excellent gifts and endowments of mind, we think there is a happy man: but we consider not that none of all those things are matter of inheritance; within a while he is to be turned out of all, and if he have not somewhat beyond all those to look to, he is but a miserable man, and so much the more miserable, that once he seemed and was reputed happy. There is a certain time wherein heirs come to possess. Thus it is with this inheritance too, there is by the Apostle mention made of *a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the ful-*

[d] Psal. iv. [e] Gen. xxv. 5.

ness of Christ[f]. And though the inheritance is rich and honourable, yet the heir being young, is held under discipline, and is more strictly dealt with possibly than the servants, sharply corrected for that which is let pass in them; yet still even then, in regard of that which he is born to, his condition is much better than theirs, and all the correction he suffers prejudices him not, but fits him for inheriting. The love of our heavenly Father is beyond the love of mothers in tenderness, and yet beyond the love of fathers (which are usually said to love more wisely) in point of wisdom: he will not undo his children, his heirs, with too much indulgence. It is one of his heavy judgments upon the foolish children of disobedience, that *ease shall slay them, and their prosperity shall prove their destruction.*

While the children of God are childish and weak in faith, they are like some great heirs before they come to years of understanding, they consider not their inheritance, and what they are to come to, have not their spirits elevated to thoughts worthy of their estate, and their behaviour conformed to it; but as they grow up in years, they come by little and little to be sensible of those things, and the nearer they come to possession, the more apprehensive they are of their quality, and what doth answerably become them to do: and this is the duty of such as are indeed heirs of glory, to grow in the understanding and consideration of that which is prepared for them, and to suit themselves, as they are able, to those great hopes. This is that the Apostle St. *Paul* prays for, for his *Ephesians*[g]. *The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the Saints.* This would make them holy and heavenly, to *have their conversation in Heaven, from whence they look for a Saviour.* That we may then the better know somewhat of the dignity and riches of this inheritance, let us consider the

[f] Eph. iv. 13. [g] Chap. i. v. 18.

description that is here given us of it. And first, it is,

Incorruptible.] Although this seems to be much the same with the *third* quality, *that fadeth not away*, which is a borrowed expression for the illustrating of its incorruptibleness; yet I conceive there is some difference, and that in these three qualities there is a gradation. Thus it is called *incorruptible*, that is, it perisheth not, cannot come to nothing, is an estate that cannot be spent; but though it were abiding, yet it might be such, as the continuance of it were not very desirable; it would be but a misery at best to continue always in this life. *Plotinus* thanked God that his soul was not tied to an immortal body. Then *undefiled*, it is not stained with the least spot. *This* signifies the purity and perfection of it, *that* the perpetuity of it; it doth not only abide, and is pure, but those together, it abideth always in its integrity. And lastly, it *fadeth not away;* it doth not fade nor wither at all, is not sometimes more, sometimes less pleasant, but ever the same, still like itself, and that is the immutability of it.

As it is *incorruptible*, it carries it away from all earthly possessions and inheritances; for all those epithets are intended to signify its opposition to the things of this world, and to shew how far it excels them all. And thus comparatively we are to consider it: for as divines say of the knowledge of God that we have here, the negative notion makes up a great part of it, we know rather what he is not than what he is, infinite, incomprehensible, immutable, *&c.* so it is of this happiness, this inheritance, and indeed it is no other but God. We cannot tell you what it is, but we can say so far what it is not, as declares it is unspeakably above all the most excellent things of the inferior world, and this present life. It is by privatives, by removing imperfections from it, that we describe it, and we can go no further, *viz. incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.*

All things that we see being compounded, may be dissolved again; the very visible Heavens, that are the purest piece of the material world (notwithstanding the pains the philosopher takes to exempt them) the Scriptures teach us that they are *corruptible*[g]. *They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment: as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed.* And from thence the Apostle to the *Hebrews*[h], and our Apostle in his other Epistle[i], use the same expression. But it is needless to fetch too great a compass, to evince the corruptibleness of all inheritances. Besides what they are in themselves, it is a shorter way to prove them corruptible in relation to us and our possessing them, by our own corruptibleness and corruption, or perishng out of this life in which we enjoy them, we are here *inter peritura perituri;* the things are passing which we enjoy, and we are passing who enjoy them. An earthly inheritance is so called in regard of succession; but to every one it is but at the most for term of life. As one of the kings of *Spain* answered to one of his courtiers, who, thinking to please his master, wished that kings were immortal. If that had been, said he, I should never have been king. When death comes, that removes a man out of all his possessions to give place to another; therefore are these inheritances decaying and dying in relation to us, because we decay and die; and when a man dies, his inheritances and honours, and all things here, are at an end, in respect of him: yea, we may say the world ends to him.

Thus *Solomon* reasons, that a man's happiness cannot be upon this earth; because it must be some durable abiding thing that must make him happy, abiding, to wit, in his enjoyment. Now, though the earth abide, yet because man abides not on the earth to possess it, but one age drives out another, one generation passeth, and another cometh, *velut*

[g] Psal. cii. 26. [h] Chap. i. v. 10. [i] Chap. iii. 11.

unda impellitur undâ; therefore his rest and his happiness cannot be here.

All possessions here are defiled and stained with many other defects and failings, still somewhat wanting, some damp on them or crack in them; fair houses, but sad cares flying about the gilded and cieled roofs; stately and soft beds; a full table, but a sickly body and queasy stomach. As the fairest face has some mole or wart in it, so all possessions are stained with sin, either in acquiring or in using them, and therefore called *mammon of unrighteousness*[k]. Iniquity is so involved in the notion of riches, that it can very hardly be separated from them. St. *Hierom* says, *verum mihi videtur illud, dives aut iniquus est, aut iniqui hæres.* Foul hands pollute all they touch; it is our sin that defiles what we possess, it is sin that burdens the whole creation, and presses groans out of the very frame of the world[l]. *For we know, that the whole creation groaneth and travelleth in pain together until now.* This our leprosy defiles our houses, the very walls and floors, our meat and drink and all we touch, polluted when alone, and polluted in society, our meetings and conversations together being for the greatest part nothing but a commerce, and interchange of sin and vanity.

We breathe up and down in an infected air, and are very receptive of the infection by our own corruption within us. We readily turn the things we possess here to occasions and instruments of sin, and think there is no liberty, nor delight in their use, without abusing them. How few are they, that can carry (as they say) a full cup even? that can have digestion strong enough for the right use of great places and estates? that can bear preferment without pride, and riches without covetousness, and ease without wantonness?

Then, as those earthly inheritances are stained with sin in their use; so what grief and strife, and contentions about obtaining or retaining them? Doth

[k] St. Luke xvi. 9. [l] Rom. viii. 22.

not matter of possession, this same *meum* and *tuum*, divide many times the affections of those who are knit together in nature, or other strait ties, and prove the very apple of strife betwixt nearest friends?

If we trace great estates to their first original, how few will be found that owe not their beginning, either to fraud, or rapine, or oppression? and the greatest empires, and kingdoms in the world have had their foundations laid in blood. Are not those defiled inheritances?

That withereth not.] A borrowed speech alluding to the decaying of plants and flowers that bud and flourish at a certain time of the year, and then fade and wither, and in winter are as if they were dead.

And this is the third disadvantage of possessions, and all things worldly, that they abide not in one estate, but are in a more uncertain and irregular inconstancy, than either the flowers and plants of the field, or the moon, from which they are called sublunary; like *Nebuchadnezzar*'s image, degenerating by degrees into baser metals, and in the end into a mixture of iron and clay.

The excellency then of this inheritance is, that it is free from all those evils, falls not under the stroke of time, comes not within the compass of its scythe, that hath so large a compass, and cuts down all other things.

There is nothing in it weighing it towards corruption. It is immortal, everlasting, for it is the fruition of the immortal everlasting God by immortal souls, and the body rejoined with it, shall likewise be immortal, having *put on incorruption*, as the Apostle speaks[m].

That fadeth not away.] No spot of sin, nor sorrow there, all pollution wiped away, and all tears with it; no envy, nor strife, not as here among men, one supplanting another, one pleading and fighting against another, dividing this point of earth with

[m] 1 Cor. xv. 54.

fire and sword: no, this inheritance is not the less by division, by being parted amongst so many brethren, every one hath it all, each his crown, and all agreeing in casting them down before his throne, from whom they have received them, and in the harmony of his praises.

This inheritance is often called a kingdom, and a crown of glory. This word may allude to those garlands of the antients, and this is its property, that the flowers in it are all *Amaranthes*, as a certain plant is named, and so it is called[n], *A crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

No change at all there, no winter and summer, not like the poor comforts here, but a bliss always flourishing. The grief of the Saints here, is not so much for the changes of outward things, as of their inward comforts. *Suavis hora, sed brevis mora.* Sweet presences of God they sometimes have; but they are short, and often interrupted: but *there*, no cloud shall come betwixt them and their sun; they shall behold him in his full brightness for ever. As there shall be no change in their beholding, so no weariness, nor abatement of their delight in beholding. They sing a new song, always the same, and yet always new. The sweetest of our music, if it were to be heard but for one whole day, will weary them that are most delighted with it. What we have here, cloys, but satisfies not: the joys above never cloy, and yet alway satisfy.

We should here consider the last property of this inheritance, namely, the *certainty* of it.

Reserved in Heaven for you.] But that is connected with the following verse, and so will be fitly joined with it. Now for some use of all this.

If these things were believed, they would persuade for themselves; we needed not add any intreaties to move you to seek after this inheritance: have we not experience enough of the vanity and misery of things corruptible? and are not a great part of our days already spent amongst them? Is it

[n] 1 Pet. v. 4.

not time to consider whether we be provided of any thing surer and better than what we have here, if we have any inheritance to go home to after our wandering? or can say with the Apostle[o], *We know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

If those things gain our assent while we hear them, yet it dies soon; scarce any retire themselves after to pursue those thoughts, and to make a work indeed of them, but busy their heads rather another way, building castles in the air, and spinning out their thoughts in vain contrivances. Happy are they whose hearts the Spirit of God sets, and fixes upon this inheritance; they may join in with the Apostle, and say as here, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again unto this lively hope, to this inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.*

Ver. 5. *Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.*

It is no doubt a great contentment to the children of God to hear of the excellencies of the life to come; they do not use to become weary of that subject; yet there is one doubt, that, if it be not removed, may damp their delight, in hearing and considering of all the rest. The richer the estate is, it will the more kindle the malice, and diligence of their enemies, to deprive them of it, and to cut them short of possessing it. And this they know, that those spiritual powers that seek to ruin them, do overmatch them far, both in craft and force.

Against the fears of this, the Apostle comforts the heirs of salvation, assuring them, that as the estate they look for is excellent, so it is certain and safe, laid up there, where it is out of the reach of all ad-

[o] 2 Cor. v. 1.

verse powers, *reserved in Heaven for you.* Besides, that this is a further evidence of the worth and excellency of this inheritance; it makes it sure; it confirms what was said of its excellency; for it must be a thing of greatest worth, that is laid up in the highest and best place of the world, namely, in Heaven for you, where nothing that is impure once enters, much less is laid up and kept. Thus the land where this inheritance lies, makes good all that hath been spoken of the dignity and riches of it.

But further, as it is a rich and pleasant country where it lieth, it hath this privilege, to be the alone land of rest and peace, free from all possibility of invasion. There is no spoiling of it, and laying it waste, and defacing its beauty, by leading armies into it, and making it the seat of war; no noise of drums nor trumpets, no inundations of one people driving out another, and sitting down in their possessions. In a word, as there is nothing there subject to decay of itself, so neither is it in danger of fraud or violence. When our Saviour speaks of this same happiness[p], in a like term, what is here called an *inheritance*, is there called a *treasure*. He expresses the permanency of it by these two, that it *hath neither moth nor rust* in itself to *corrupt* it; nor can *thieves break through and steal it.* There is a worm at the root of all our enjoyments here, corrupting causes within themselves; and besides that, they are exposed to injury from without, that may deprive us of them. How many stately palaces, that have been possibly divers years in building, hath fire upon a very small beginning destroyed in a few hours? What great hopes of gain by traffic hath one tempest mocked and disappointed? How many that have thought their possessions very sure, yet have lost them by some trick of law? And others, (as in time of war) driven from them by the sword? Nothing free from all danger, but this *inheritance*, that is laid

[p] St. Mat. vi. 20.

up in the hands of God, and kept in Heaven for us. The highest stations in the world, namely, the estate of kings, they are but mountains of prey, one robbing, and spoiling another: but in that holy mountain above, there is none to hurt, nor spoil, nor offer violence. What the prophet speaks of the church here, is more perfectly and eminently true of it above[q].

This is indeed a necessary condition of our joy in the thoughts of this happy estate, that we have some persuasion of our propriety, that it is ours: that we do not speak and hear of it, as travellers passing by a pleasant place do behold, and discourse of its fair structure, the sweetness of the seat, the planting, the gardens, and meadows that are about it, and so pass on; having no further interest in it. But when we hear of this glorious inheritance, this treasure, this kingdom that is pure and rich, and lasting; we may add, it is mine, it is reserved in heaven, and reserved for me; I have received the evidences, and the earnest of it; and as it is kept safe for me, so I shall likewise be preserved to it, and that is the other part of the certainty that compleats the comforts of it[r].

The salvation that Christ hath purchased is indeed laid up in Heaven, but we that seek after it, are on earth, compassed about with dangers and temptations. What avails it us, that our salvation is in Heaven, in the place of safety and quietness, while we ourselves are tossed upon the stormy seas of this world, amidst rocks and shelves, every hour in hazard of shipwreck? Our inheritance is in a sure hand indeed, our enemies cannot come at it; but they may over-run and destroy us at their pleasure, for we are in the midst of them. Thus might we think and complain, and lose the sweetness of all our other thoughts concerning Heaven, if there were not as firm a promise for our own safety in the midst of our dangers, as there is of the safety of our inheritance that is out of danger.

[q] Isaiah lxv. 25. [r] See Eph. i. 14.

The assurance is full, thus, it is *kept* for us in Heaven, and we kept on earth for it, as it is *reserved* for us, we are no less surely preserved to it. There is here, 1. The estate itself, *salvation.* 2. The preservation, or securing of those that expect it, *kept.* 3. The time of full possession, *in the last time.*

1. The estate, *unto salvation.*] Before it is called an *inheritance*; here we are more particularly told what is meant by that, namely, *salvation.* This is more expressly sure, being a deliverance from misery, and it imports withal the possession of perfect happiness. The first part of our happiness is to be freed from those miseries to which we are subject by our guiltiness. To be set free from the curse of the law, and the wrath of God, from everlasting death. 2. From all kind of mortality or decaying. 3. From all power and stain of sin. 4. From all temptation. 5. From all the griefs and afflictions of this life. To have the perfection of grace, to be full of holiness, and the perfection of bliss, full of joy, in the continual vision of God. But how little are we able to say of this our Apostle here teacheth us, that it is vailed to us, only so much shines through, as we are capable of here: but the revealed knowledge of it is only in the possession; it is *to be revealed in the last time.*

And *2dly*, their preservation, with the causes of it, *Kept by the power of God through faith.* The inheritance is kept not only in safety, but in quietness. The children of God for whom it is kept, while they are here, are kept safe indeed, but not unmolested, and unassaulted, they have enemies, and such as are stirring, and cunning, and powerful; but in the midst of them, they are guarded and defended; they perish not, according to the prayer of our Saviour poured out for them[s], *I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world: but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.*

They have the prince of the power of the air,

[s] John xvii. 16.

and all his armies, all the forces he can make against them. Though his power is nothing but tyranny and usurpation, yet because once they were under his yoke, he bestirs himself to pursue them, when they are led forth from their captivity, as[t], *Pharaoh* with all his chariots and horses and horse-men pursues after the *Israelites* going out of *Egypt*.

The word in the original, φρουρουμενοι, here translated *kept*, is a military term, used for those who are *kept* as in a fort or garrison-town besieged. So satan is still raising batteries against this fort, using all ways to take it, by strength or stratagem, unwearied in his assaults, and very skilful to know his advantages; and where we are weakest, there to set on. And besides all this, he hath intelligence with a party within us, ready to betray us to him; so that it were impossible for us to hold out, were there not another watch and guard than our own, and other walls and bulwarks than any that our skill and industry can raise for our own defence. In this then is our safety, that there is a power above our own, yea, and above all our enemies, that guards us, *salvation* itself *our walls and bulwarks*. We ought to watch, but when we do in obedience to our commander, the captain of our salvation, yet it is his own watching, who *sleeps* not, nor so much as *slumbers*, it is that preserves us, and makes ours not to be in vain[u]. And therefore those two are jointly commanded, *Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. Watch*, there's the necessity of our diligence: *Pray*, there's the insufficiency of it, and the necessity of his watching, by whose power we are effectually preserved, and that power is our fort[x], *Salvation hath God appointed for walls and bulwarks:* what more safe than to be walled with *saluation* itself?[y]. *The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous fly into it and are safe.*

Now the causes are two, 1. Supreme, *the power*

[t] Exod. xiv. 5. 9. [u] Psal. cxxvi. 1. Isa. xxvii. 3.
[x] Isa. xxvi. 1. [y] Prov. xviii. 10.

of God. 2. *Subordinate, faith.* The supreme *power of God,* is that on which depends our stability and perseverance. When we consider how weak we are in ourselves, yea the very strongest among us, and how assaulted, we wonder, and justly we may, that any can continue one day in the state of grace: but when we look on the strength by which we are guarded, the power of God; then we see the reason of stability to the end: for omnipotency supports us, and the everlasting arms are under us.

Then *faith* is the second cause of our preservation: because it applies the first cause, the *power of God.* Our faith lays hold upon this power, and this power strengthens faith, and so we are preserved; it puts us within those walls, sets the soul within the guard of the power of God, which by self-confidence, and vain presuming in its own strength, is exposed to all kind of danger. Faith is a humble self-denying grace, makes the christian nothing in himself, and all in God.

The weakest persons that are within a strong place, women and children, though they were not able to resist the enemy, if they were alone; yet so long as the place wherein they are, is of sufficient strength, and well manned, and every way accomdate to hold out, they are in safety; thus the weakest believer is safe, because by believing he is within the strongest of all defences. Faith is the victory, and Christ sets his strength against satan's, and when the christian is hard beset with some temptation, too strong for himself, then he looks up to him that is the great conqueror of the powers of darkness, and calls to him, "Now Lord assist thy "servant in this encounter, and put to thy strength, "that the glory may be thine." Thus faith is such an engine as draws in the power of God, and his Son Jesus into the works and conflicts that it hath in hand. *This is our victory even our faith*[z].

[z] 1 John v. 4.

It is the property of *a good christian* to magnify the power of God, and to have high thoughts of it, and therefore it is his privilege to find safety in that power. *David* cannot satisfy himself with one, or two expressions of it, but delights in multiplying them[b]. *The Lord is my rock, and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my strength, in whom I will trust, my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.* Faith looks above all, both that which the soul hath, and that which it wants, and answers all doubts and fears with this almighty power upon which it rests.

3*dly*. The time of full possession, *ready to be revealed in the last time.*] This salvation is that great work wherein God intended to manifest the glory of his grace, contrived before time, and in the several ages of the world brought forward, after the decreed manner; and the full accomplishment of it reserved for the end of time.

The souls of the faithful do enter into the possession of it, when they remove from their houses of clay; yet is not their happiness compleat till that great day of the appearing of Jesus Christ; they are naturally imperfect till their bodies be raised, and rejoined to their souls, to partake together of their bliss: and they are mystically imperfect, till all the rest of the members of Jesus Christ be added to them.

But then shall their joy be absolutely full, when both their own bodies, and the mystical body of Christ shall be glorified, when all the children of that glorious family shall meet, and sit down to that great marriage supper at their father's table. Then shall the music of that new song be full, when there is not one wanting of those that are appointed to sing it for eternity. In that day shall our Lord Jesus *be glorified in his Saints, and admired in all them that believe*[c].

You see what it is that the Gospel offers you, and you may gather how great both your folly and your

[b] Psal. xviii. 1. [c] 2 Thes. i. 10.

guiltiness will be, if you neglect and slight so great salvation when it is brought to you, and you are intreated to receive it; this is all that the preaching of the word aims at, and yet who hearkens to it? How few lay hold on this eternal life, this inheritance, this crown that is held forth to all that hear of it?

Oh! that you could be persuaded to be saved, that you would be willing to embrace salvation. You think you would; but if it be so, then I may say, though you would be saved, yet your custom of sin, your love to sin, and love to the world, will not suffer you: and these will still hinder you, unless you put on holy resolutions to break through them, and trample them under foot, and take this kingdom by a hand of violence, that God is so well pleased with; he is willingly overcome by that force, and gives this kingdom most willingly, where it is so taken; it is not attained by slothfulness, and sitting still with folded hands; it must be invaded with strength of faith, with armies of prayers and tears; and they that set upon it thus are sure to take it.

Consider what we are doing, how we misplace our diligence on things that abide not, or we abide not to enjoy them. *We have no abiding city here* (saith the Apostle;) but he adds, that which comforts the citizens of the new *Jerusalem, We look for one to come, whose builder and maker is God.* Hear not those things idly, as if they concerned you not, but let them move you to resolution and actions; say as they said of *Canaan, It is a good land, let us go up and possess it.* Learn to use what you have here as travellers, and let your home, your inheritance, your treasure be on high, which is by far the richest and the safest; and if it be so with you, then, *Where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also.*

Ver. 6. *Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.*

THE same motives cannot beget contrary passions in the soul, therefore the Apostle reduces the mixture of sorrowing and rejoicing that is usual in the heart of a christian, to the different causes of both, and shews which of the two hath the stronger cause, and therefore is always predominant.

His scope is to stir up and strengthen spiritual joy in his afflicted brethren; and therefore having set the matter of it before them in the preceding verses, he now applies it, and expressly opposes it to their distresses.

Some read those words exhortatively, *In which rejoice ye*, it is so intended; but I conceive it serves that end better indicatively, as we now read it, *In which ye rejoice.* It exhorts in a more insinuating and persuasive manner, that it may be so, to urge it on them, that it is so. Thus St. Paul[d], *King Agrippa believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.* And straight he answered, *Thou almost persuadest me to be a christian.* This implies how just, and how reasonable it is, that the things spoken of should make them glad, they will rejoice in those, yea do rejoice. Certainly if you know and consider what the causes of your joy are, ye cannot chuse but find it within you, and in such a measure as to swallow up all your temporary sorrows, how great and how many soever their causes be.

We are then to consider severally those bitter waters, and sweet, this sorrow, and this joy, 1. In their springs. 2. In their streams.

And first they are called *temptations*, and *manifold temptations.* The habits of divine supernatural grace, are not acquirable by human study, or industry or by exercise, they are of immediate in-

[d] Acts xxvi. 27.

fusion from Heaven; yet are they infused to that end, that they may act and exercise themselves in the several conditions and occurrences of a christian's life, and by that they grow stronger. Whatsoever oppositions or difficulties grace meets with in its acting, go under this general name of *temptations*. It is not necessary to reckon up the variety of senses of this word, in its full latitude, how God is said to tempt man, and how it is said that he tempts him not, how man tempts God, and how it is said that God is not tempted, how satan tempts men, and men one another, and a man himself. All those are several acceptations of this word, but the *temptations* here meant, are the things by which men are tempted, and particularly the saints of God. And though there is nothing in the words, that may not agree to all sorts of temptations the Godly are subject to; yet I conceive it is particularly meant of their afflictions and distresses, as the Apostle *James* likewise uses it[f].

And they are so called, because they give particular and notable proof of the temper of a christian's Spirit, and draw forth evidence both of the truth, and the measure of the grace that is in them. If they fail and are foiled, as sometimes they are, this convinces them of that human frailty, and weakness that is in them, and so humbles them, and drives them out of themselves to depend upon another for more strength, and better success in after-encounters. If they acquit themselves like christians indeed, (the Lord managing and assisting that grace which he hath given them) then all their valour, and strength, and victories turn to his praise, from whom they have received all.

A man is not only unknown to others but to himself, that hath never met with such difficulties, as require faith and christian fortitude and patience to surmount them. How shall a man know whether his meekness and calmness of spirit be real or not, while he meets with no provocation, nothing that

[f] Chap. i. ver. 2.

contradicts or crosses him? But when somewhat sets upon him that is in itself very unpleasant and grievous to him, and yet if in that case he retains his moderation of spirit, and flies not out into impatience, neither against God nor men, this gives experiment of the truth and soundness of that grace in him; whereas standing water that is clear at top while it is untouched, yet if it have mud at the bottom, stir it a little, and it rises presently.

It is not altogether unprofitable, yea it is much wisdom in christians to be arming themselves against such temptations as may befal them hereafter, though they have not as yet met with them; to labour to overcome them before hand, to suppose the hardest things that may be incident to them, and to put on the strongest resolutions they can attain unto; yet all that is but an imaginary effort; and therefore there is no assurance that the victory is any more than imaginary too, till it come to action, and then they that have spoken, and thought very confidently may prove but (as one said of the *Athenians*) *fortes in tabula*, patient and courageous in picture or fancy; and notwithstanding all their arms, and dexterity in handling them by way of exercise, may be foully defeated when they are to fight in earnest. The children of *Ephraim* being armed, and carrying bows (says the *Psalmist*)[g], *yet turned back in the day of battle.* It is the battle tries the soldier, and the storm the pilot. How would it appear that christians can be themselves, not only patient but chearful in poverty, in disgrace, and temptations, and persecutions, if it were not often their lot to meet with those? He that framed the heart knows it to be but deceitful, and he that gives grace knows the weakness, and strength of it exactly; yet he is pleased to speak thus, That by afflictions and hard tasks he tries what is in the hearts of his children. For the word of God speaks to men, and therefore it speaks the language of the children of men: thus[h], *Now I know that thou fearest God,*

[g] Psal. lxxviii. 9. [h] Gen. xxii. 12.

seeing thou hast not withheld thy Son, thine only Son from me.

God delights to call forth his champions to meet with great temptations, to make them bear crosses of more than ordinary weight; as commanders in war put men of most valour and skill, upon the hardest services. God sets some strong furious trial upon a strong christian made strong by his own grace; and by his victory, makes it appear to the world, that though there is a great deal of the counterfeit coin of profession in religion, yet some there are, that have the power, the reality of it, and that it is not an invention, but there is truth in it, that the invincible grace, the very Spirit of God dwells in the hearts of true believers, that he hath a number that do not only speak big, but do indeed and in good earnest despise the world, and overcome it by his strength. Some men take delight to see some kind of beasts fight together; but to see a christian mind encountering some great affliction and conquering it, to see his valour, in not sinking at the hardest distresses of this life, nor the most affrightful end of it, the cruelest kinds of death, for his sake, this is (as one said) *dignum deo spectaculum*, this is a combat that God delights to look upon, and he is not a mere beholder in it; for it is the power of his own grace that enables and supports the christian in all those conflicts and temptations.

Through manifold temptations.] This expresses a multitude of temptations, and those too of divers kinds, many and manifold. It were no hard condition to have a trial now and then, with long ease and prosperity betwixt; but to be plied with one affliction at the heels of another, to have them come thronging in by multitudes and of different kinds, uncouth, unaccustomed evils, such as a man hath not been acquainted with before, this is that which is often the portion of those that are the beloved of God[i], *Deep calleth unto deep, at the*

[i] Psal. xlii. 7.

noise of thy water-spouts; all thy waves, and thy billows are gone over me.

Ye are in heaviness.] This the Apostle blames not, but aims at the moderating of it. Seek not altogether to dry up this stream, but to bound it, and keep it within its banks. Grace doth not destroy the life of nature, but adds to it a life more excellent, yea grace doth not only permit but requires some feeling of afflictions. There is an affected pride of spirit in some men, instead of patience; suitable to the doctrine of the *Stoicks* (as it is usually taken) they strive, not to feel at all the afflictions that are on them; but this is to *despise the correction of the Lord*, which is alike forbidden, as *fainting* under it[k]. We should not stop our ears but *hear the rod, and him that hath appointed it*, as the Prophet speaks[l]. Where there is no feeling at all, there can be no patience. Consider it as the hand of God, and thence argue the soul into submission[m]. *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.* But this heaviness is mitigated, and set as it were within its banks, betwixt these two considerations, 1. The *utility*, 2. The *brevity* of it. The profitableness, and the shortness of it.

To a worldly man great gain sweetens the hardest labour; and to a christian, spiritual profit and advantage may do much to move him to take with those afflictions well that are otherwise very unpleasant, though *they are not joyous for the present;* yet this allays the sorrow of them, the fruit that grows out of them, *that peaceable fruit of righteousness*[n].

A bundle of folly is in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall beat it out, saith *Solomon.* Though the children of God are truly (as our Saviour calls them) the children of wisdom; yet being renewed only in part, they are not altogether free from those follies that call for this rod to beat them out, and sometimes have such a bundle of

[k] Heb. xii. 5. [l] Micah vi. 9. [m] Psal. xxxix. 9. [n] Heb. xii. 11.

follies as require a bundle of rods to be spent upon it, *many and manifold afflictions.*

It is not an easy matter to be drawn from, nor to be beaten from the love of this world, and this is that which God mainly requires of his children, that they be not in love with the world, nor the things of it; for that is contrary to the love of God, and so far as that is entertained, this is wanting. And if in the midst of afflictions they are sometimes subject to this disease, how would it grow upon them with ease and prosperity? When they are beaten from one worldly folly or delight, they are ready through nature's corruption, to lay hold upon some other, being thrust out from it at one door, to enter at some other: and as children unwilling to be weaned, if one breast be imbittered, they seek to the other; and therefore there must be somewhat to drive them from that too. Thus it is clear, there is need, yea great need of afflictions, yea of many afflictions, that the Saints be *chastened by the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world*[o].

Many resemblances there are for illustration of this truth, in things both of nature and of art: some common, and others choicer; but these are not needful. The experience of christians tells them, how easily they grow proud and secure and carnal with a little ease, and when outward things go smoothly with them; and therefore what unhappiness were it for them to be very happy that way?

Let us learn then, that in regard of our present frailty there is need of afflictions, and so not promise ourselves exemption, how calm soever our seas are for the present; and then for the number and measure and weight of them, to resign that wholly into the hands of our wise Father and physician, who perfectly knows our mould and our maladies, and what kind and quantity of chastisement is needful for our cure.

Though now for a season (if need be) ye are in

[o] 1 Cor. xi. 32.

heaviness.] The other consideration that moderates this heaviness, is its shortness: because we willingly forget eternity, therefore this moment seems much in our eyes; but if we could look upon it aright, of how little concernment is it, what be our condition here? If it were as prosperous as we could wish or imagine, it is but for a *little season;* the rich man in the Gospel talked of many years, but, *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee,* was the longest period. The many years are quickly drawn to a very great abatement, and if full of pains and griefs, those do help to put an end to themselves, and hasten to it. Then well might St. *Austin* say, *Hic ure, cæde, modò ibi parcas,* use me here as pleaseth thee, so as that hereafter it may be well with me.

Wherein.] This word, though it cannot fall amiss, being referred to any particular, to which interpreters have appropriated it, yet it is rather to be taken as relative to the whole complex sense of the preceding verses, concerning the hope of glory. In this thing ye rejoice, that ye are begotten again; that there is such an inheritance, and that you are made heirs of it; that it is kept for you, and you for it; that nothing can come betwixt you and it, to disappoint you of possessing and enjoying it, though there be many deserts and mountains and seas in the way, yet you are ascertained, that you shall come safe thither.

This is but one thing, but the cause of your grief is *temptations,* and *manifold temptations,* yet this one thing weighs down all that multitude; the heart being grieved in one thing, naturally looks out for its ease to some other; and there is usually somewhat that is a man's great comfort, that he turns his thoughts to, when he is crossed and afflicted in other things: but herein lies the folly of the world, that the things they chuse for their refuge and comfort, are such as may change themselves, and turn into discomfort and sorrow; but the godly man (that is, the fool in the natural man's

eyes) goes beyond all the rest in his wise choice in this. He rises above all that is subject to change, casts his anchor within the vail. That in which he rejoiceth is still matter of joy unmoveable and unalterable, though not only his estate, but the whole world were turned upside down, yet this is the same, or rather in the Psalmist's words, *Though the earth were removed, and the greatest mountains cast into the sea, yet will not we fear*[p]. When we shall receive that rich and pure and abiding inheritance, that salvation that shall be revealed in the last time, and when time itself shall cease to be, then there shall be no more reckoning of our joys by days and hours, but they shall run parallel with eternity. When all our love that is scattered and parcelled out upon the vanities amongst which we are here, shall be united and gathered into one, and fixed upon God, and the soul filled with the delight of his presence.

The sorrow was limited, and bounded by these considerations we spoke of: but this joy, this exultation, and leaping for joy (for so it is) is not bounded, it cannot be too much; its measure is to know no measure. The afflictions, the matter of heaviness, are but a transient touch of pain; but that whereon this joy is built is most permanent, the measure of it cannot exceed, for the matter of it is infinite and eternal, beyond all hyperbole. There is no expression we have can reach it, much less go beyond it; itself is the hyperbole, still surpassing all that can be said of it. Even in the midst of heaviness itself, such is this joy that can maintain itself in the depth of sorrow; this oil of gladness still swims above, and cannot be drowned by all the floods of affliction, yea it is often most sweet in the greatest distress. Then the soul relishes spiritual joy best, when it is not glutted with worldly delights, but finds them turned into bitterness.

For application. In that we profess ourselves christians, we all pretend to be the sons of God,

[p] Psal. xlvi. 2.

and so heirs of this glory; and if each man were particularly asked, he would say, he hoped to attain it: but if there were nothing else, this may abundantly convince us, that the greatest part of us delude ourselves, and are deceived in this; for how few are there that do really find this height of joy, gladness and exultation, in their thoughts and hopes of it, that do daily more refresh and glad themselves with the consideration of that which is laid up for them above, than with all their enjoyments here below?

Consider how the news of some small outward advantage that is to come to us, raises our light vain hearts, and makes them leap within us; and yet this news of a kingdom prepared for us (if we be indeed believers) stirs us not, our hearts are as little affected with it as if it concerned us not at all: and this is too clear an evidence against us, that indeed it concerns us not, our portion as yet is not in it.

In what a fool's paradise will men be with the thoughts of worthless things, and such things too as they shall never obtain, nor ever shall have any further being than what they have in their fancy? And how will men frequently roll over in their minds the thoughts of any pleasing good they hope for? And yet we that say, we have hopes of the glory to come, can pass many days without one hour spent in the rejoicing thoughts of the happiness we look for. If any of a mean condition for the present were made sure to become very rich, and be advanced to great honour within a week, and after that to live to a great age in that high estate, enjoying health and all imaginable pleasures; judge ye, whether in the few days betwixt the knowledge of those news and the enjoying them, the thoughts of what he were to attain to, would not be frequent with him, and be always welcome? There is no comparison betwixt all we can imagine this way, and the hopes we speak of, and yet how seldom are our thoughts upon those, and how faint and slender is our rejoicing in them? Can we deny that it is

unbelief of those things that causeth this neglect and forgetting of them? The discourse, the tongue of men and angels cannot beget divine belief of the happiness to come; only he that gives it, gives faith likewise to apprehend it, and lay hold upon it, and upon our believing to be filled with joy in the hopes of it.

Ver. 7. *That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*

THE way of the just (saith *Solomon*) *is as the shining light, that shineth more and more to the perfect day.* Still making forward, and ascending towards perfection, moving as fast when they are clouded with affliction as at any time else; yea, all that seems to work against them, furthers them. Those graces that would possibly grow heavy and unwieldy, by too much ease, are held in breath, and increase their activity and strength by conflict. Divine grace, even in the heart of weak and sinful man, is an invincible thing. Drown it in the waters of adversity, it rises more beautiful, as not being drowned indeed, but only washed; throw it into the furnace of fiery trials, it comes out purer, and loses nothing but the dross, which our corrupt nature mixes with it. Thus here the Apostle expounds the *(if need be)* of the former verse, and so justifies the joy in afflictions, which there he speaks of, by their utility and faith's advantage by them; it is so tried that it shall appear in its full brightness at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The peculiar treasure of a christian being the grace that he receives from Heaven, and particularly that sovereign grace of faith, whatsoever he can be assured will better him any way in this, he will not only bear it patiently, but gladly embrace it[q]. Therefore the Apostle sets this before his brethren in

[q] Rom. v. 3.

those words of this verse, where is, 1. The worth and excellency of faith. 2. The usefulness of temptations in relation to it.

1*st*, The worth and excellency of faith. The trial of faith is called *more precious*, a work of more worth than the trial of gold, because faith itself is of more value than gold: the Apostle chuses this comparison, as fitting his purpose for both, for the illustration of the worth of faith, and likewise the use of temptations, representing the one by gold, and the other by the trying of gold in the fire.

The worth of gold is, 1. Real, the purest and most precious of all metals, having many excellent properties beyond them, as they that write of the nature of gold observe. 2. Far greater in the esteem and opinion of men. See how men hurry up and down, over sea and land, unwearied in their pursuit, with hazard of life, and often with the loss of uprightness and a good conscience; and not only thus esteem it in itself, but make it the rule of their esteem one of another, valuing men less or more, as they are more or less furnished with it. And we see at what a height that is; for things we would commend much, we borrow its name to them, *viz. Golden mediocrity;* and that age which they would call the best of all, they name it the *Golden age*: And as *Seneca* observes, describing heavenly things, (as *Ovid* the sun's palace and chariot) still *gold* is the word for all.

And the holy scriptures descending to our reach, do set forth the riches of the new *Jerusalem* by it[r], and the excellency of Christ[s]. And here the preciousness of faith, whereof Christ is the object, is said to be *more precious than gold.*

I will not insist in the parallel of faith with gold, in the other qualities of it, as that it is pure and solid as gold, and that it is most ductile and malleable as gold; beyond all other metals, it plies any way with the will of God. But then faith truly enrich-

[r] Rev. xxi. [s] Cant. v. 11, 14.

es the soul: And as gold answers all things, so faith gives the soul propriety to all the rich consolations of the gospel, to all the promises of life and salvation, to all needful blessings; it draws virtue from Christ to strengthen itself, and all other graces.

And thus it is not only precious as gold, but goes far above the comparison; it is *more precious*, yea *much more precious*, 1. In its original; the other is digged out of the bowels of the earth, but the mine of this gold is above, it comes from heaven. 2. In its nature, answerable to its original, it is immaterial, spiritual and pure. We refine gold and make it purer, but when we receive faith pure of itself, we mix dross with it, and make it impure by the allay of unbelief. 3. In its endurance, flowing from the former, it perisheth not. Gold is a thing in itself corruptible and perishing, and to particular owners, it perisheth in their loss of it, being deprived of it any way.

Other graces are likewise tried in the same furnace; but faith is named as the root of all the rest. Sharp afflictions give a christian a trial of his love to God, whether it be single, and for himself or not; for then it will be the same when he strikes, as when he embraces, and in the fire of affliction will rather grow the hotter, and be more taken off from the world, and set upon him. Again, the grace of patience is put particularly upon trial in distresses: But both these spring from Faith. For love rises from a right and strong belief of the goodness of God; and patience from a persuasion of the wisdom and love of God, and the truth of his promises. He hath said, *I will not fail thee*, and that we shall not be tempted above our strength, and he will give the issue. Now the belief of these things causes patience. *The trial of faith worketh patience*[t]. For therefore doth the christian resign up himself, and all that concerns him, his trials, the measure and length of them all, unto God's disposal, because he

[t] Jam. i. 3.

knows that he is in the hands of a wise and loving father. Thus the trial of these, and other particular graces, doth still resolve into this, and is comprised under the trial of faith. This brings us,

2*dly*, to the usefulness of temptations in relation to it.

This trial, (as that of gold) may be for a twofold end, 1. For experiment of the truth and pureness of a christian's faith. 2. For refining it yet more, and to raise it to a higher pitch or degree of pureness.

1. The furnace of affliction shows upright real faith to be such indeed, remaining still the same even in the fire, the same that it was, undiminished, as good gold loses none of its quantity in the fire. Doubtless many are deceived in time of ease and prosperity with imaginary faith and fortitude: So that there may be still some doubt while a man is underset with outward helps, as riches, friends, esteem, *&c.* whether he leans upon those, or upon God, who is an invisible support, though stronger than all that are visible, and is the peculiar and alone stay of faith in all conditions. But when all these outward props are pluckt away from a man, then it will be manifest, whether something else upholds him or not; for if there be nothing else, then he falls; but if his mind stands firm, and unremoved as before, then it is evident he laid not his weight upon these things he had then about him; but was built upon a foundation though not seen, which is able alone to stay him, although he be not only frustrated of all other supports, but beaten upon with storms and tempests, as our Saviour says, *the house fell not, because it was founded on a rock*[u].

This testified the truth of *David*'s faith, who found it staying him upon God, when there was nothing else near that could do it, *I had fainted, unless I had believed*[x]. So in his strait[y], where it is said, that *David was greatly distressed; but he encouraged himself in the Lord his God.* Thus[z], *My*

[u] Mat. vii. 25. [x] Psal. xxvii. 13. [y] 1 Sam. xxx. 6. [z] Psal. lxxiii. 26.

flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and portion for ever. The heart's natural strength of spirit and resolution may bear up under outward weakness, or the failing of the flesh: but when the heart itself fails, that is the strength of the flesh, what shall strengthen it? nothing but God, *who is the strength of the heart and its portion for ever.* Thus faith worketh alone, when the case suits that of the Prophet's[a], *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines,* &c. *yet*[b], *I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.*

In spiritual trials that are the sharpest and most fiery of all, when the furnace is within a man, when God doth not only shut up his loving kindness from his feeling; but seems to shut him up in hot displeasure, when he writes bitter things against him, yet then to depend upon him, and wait for his salvation, this is not only a true, but a strong, and very refined faith indeed, and the more he smites, the more to cleave to him. Well might *he* say, *When I am tried I shall come forth as gold,* who could say that word, *though he slay me yet will I trust in him:* though I saw, as it were, his hand lifted up to destroy me, yet from that same hand would I expect salvation.

2. As the furnace shews faith to be what it is, so also it betters it, and makes it more precious and purer than it was.

The graces of the spirit, as they come from the hand of God that infuses them, are nothing but pureness: but being put into a heart where sin dwells, (which till the body be dissolved and taken to pieces, cannot be fully purged out) there they are mixed with corruption and dross: and particularly faith is mixed with unbelief, and love of earthly things, and dependance upon the creature, if not more than God, yet together with him; and for this is the furnace needful, that the soul may be purified from this dross, and made more sublime and spiritual in be-

[a] Habbak. iii. 17. [b] ver. 18.

lieving. It is a hard task, and many times comes but slowly forward to teach the heart by discourse and speculation to sit loose from the world at all sides, not to cleave to the best things in it, though we be compassed about with them, *though riches do increase*, yet *not to set our hearts on them*[c], not to trust in such *uncertain things*[d], as they are, as the Apostle speaks. Therefore God is pleased to chuse the more effectual way to teach his own the right and pure exercise of faith, either by withholding or withdrawing those things from them. He makes them relish the sweetness of spiritual comfort, by depriving them of those outward comforts whereon they were in most danger to have doated to excess, and so to have forgotten themselves and him; when they are reduced to necessity, and experimentally trained up, easily to let go their hold of any thing earthly, and to stay themselves only upon their rock, this is the very refining of their faith, by those losses and afflictions wherewith they are exercised. They that learn bodily exercises, as fencing, *&c.* are not taught by sitting still, and hearing rules, or seeing others practise, but they learn by exercising themselves. The way to profit in the art of believing, or coming to this spiritual activity of faith, is, to be often put to that work in the most difficult way, to make up all wants and losses in God, and to sweeten the bitterest griefs with his loving kindness.

Might be found unto praise and honour and glory.] This is the end that is intended, and shall be certainly obtained by all these hot trials. Faith shall come through them all, and *shall be fouud unto praise*, &c. An unskilful beholder may think it strange to see gold thrown into the fire, and left there for a time; but he that puts it there would be loth to lose it; his purpose is to make some costly piece of work of it: every believer gives himself to Christ, and he undertakes to present them blameless to the Father; not one of them shall be lost,

[c] Psal. lxii. 10. [d] 1 Tim. vi. 17.

nor one drachm of their faith; they shall be found, and their faith shall be found when he appears. That faith that is here in the furnace shall be then made up into a crown of pure gold, *it shall be found unto praise and honour and glory.*

This praise and honour and glory may be referred to believers themselves, according to the Apostle St. *Paul*'s expression[e], or to Christ that appears: but the two will agree well together, that it be both to their praise, and to the praise of Christ; for certainly all their praise and glory shall terminate in the glory of their head Christ, who is God blessed for ever; they have each their crown, but their honour is, to cast them all down before his throne. *He shall be glorified in his Saints and admired in them that believe.* They shall be glorious in him; and therefore in all their glory he shall be glorified: for as they have derived their glory from him, it shall all return back to him again.

At the appearance of Jesus Christ.] This denotes the time when this shall come to pass; for Christ is faithful and true; he hath promised to come again, and to judge the world in righteousness, and he will come, and will not tarry; he shall judge righteously in that day, who was himself unrighteously judged here on earth. It is called the *Revelation;* all other things shall be revealed in that day, the most hidden things, good and evil unvailed; but it is eminently the day of *his Revelation,* it shall be by his light, by the brightness of his coming that all other things shall be revealed; but he himself shall be the worthiest sight of all: all eyes shall behold him. He shall then gloriously appear before all men and angels, and shall by all be acknowledged to be the Son of God, and judge of the world: some shall with joy know him, and acknowledge him to be so, others to their horror and amazement. How beautiful shall he be to those that love him, when he as the glorious head shall

[e] Rom. ii. 7.

appear with his whole body mystical together with him?

Then the glory and praise that all the saints shall be honoured with, shall recompense fully all the scorns and ignominies, and distresses they have met with here. And they shall shine the brighter for them. Oh! if we considered often of that solemn day, how light should we set by the opinions of men, and all outward hardships that can befal us? How easily should we digest dispraise and dishonour here, and pass through all chearfully, provided we may be then found in him, and so partakers of *praise, and glory, and honour in that day of his appearing!*

Ver. 8. *Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.*

Ver. 9. *Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.*

It is a paradox to the world that the Apostle hath asserted, that there is a joy that can subsist in the midst of sorrow; therefore he insists in the confirmation of it; and in all those words proves it to the full, yea, with advantage, that the saints have not only some measure of joy in the griefs that abound upon them here, but excellent and eminent joy, such as makes good all that can be said of it, cannot be spoke too much of, for it is *unspeakable*, nor too much magnified, for it is *glorious*.

To evidence the truth of this, and to confirm his brethren in the experienced knowledge of it, he expresses here more particularly and distinctly the causes of this their joy, which are,

1. The *object* or *matter* of it. 2. The *apprehension* and *appropriation* of that *object*, which two conjoined, are the entire cause of all rejoicing.

1. The *object* is Jesus Christ, ver. 8. and the salvation purchased by him, ver. 9. For these two cannot be severed, and these two verses that speak of

them, require, (as is evident by their connexion) to be considered together. 2. The apprehension of these, set forth, 1. negatively, not by bodily sight. 2. Positively, whereas that might seem to abate the certainty and liveliness of their rejoicing, that it is of things they had not seen, nor do yet see, that is abundantly made up by three for one, each of them more excellent than the mere bodily sight of Christ in the flesh, which many had, which were never the better by it; the three are, those three prime christian graces, faith, love, and hope; the two former in ver. 8. the third in ver. 9. Faith in Christ begetting love to him, and both these giving assured hope of salvation by him, making it as certain to them, as if it were already in their hand, and they in possession of it. And from all those together results this exultation, or leaping for joy, *joy unspeakable and full of glory.*

This is that *one thing* that so much concerns us; and therefore we mistake very far, and forget our own highest interest too much, when we either speak or hear of it slightly, and apply not our hearts to it. What is it that all our thoughts and endeavours drive at? What means all that we are doing in the world? though we take several ways to it, and wrong ways for the most part, yea such ways as lead not to it, but set us farther off from it; yet that which we all seek after by all our labour under the sun, is something that may be matter of contentment and rejoicing to us when we have attained it: now here it is, and in vain is it sought for elsewhere. And for this end it is represented to you, that it may be yours, if ye will entertain it; not only that you may know this to be a truth, that in Jesus Christ is laid up true consolation and rejoicing, that he is the magazine and treasury of it, but that you may know how to bring him home into your hearts, and lodge him there, and so to have the spring of joy within you.

That which gives full joy to the soul must be something that is higher and better than itself. In

a word, he that made it, can only make it glad after this manner, with *unspeakable and glorious joy*. But the soul remaining guilty of rebellion against him, and unreconciled, cannot behold him but as an enemy; any belief that it can have of him while it is in that posture, is not such as can fetch *love* and *hope*, and so *rejoicing;* but such as the faith of devils produceth, only begetting terror and trembling: but the light of his countenance shining in the face of his Son the Mediator, glads the heart; and it is the looking upon him so, that causeth the soul to *believe*, and *love*, and *hope* and *rejoice*. Therefore the Apostle[f], in his description of the estate of the *Gentiles* before Christ was preached to them, joins these together, *without Christ*, that was the cause of all the rest; therefore, without comfort in the promises, *without hope, and without God in the world;* so he is here by our Apostle exprest, as the object. In all these therefore he is the matter of our joy, because our *faith* and *love* and *hope of salvation* do center in him.

The Apostle writing to the dispersed *Jews*, many of whom had not known nor seen Christ in the flesh, commends their love and faith, for this reason, that it did not depend upon bodily sight, but was pure, and spiritual, and made them of the number of those that our Saviour himself pronounces *blessed, who have not seen, and yet believe*. You saw him not when he dwelt amongst men, and walked to and fro preaching, and working miracles. Many of those that did then hear and see him believed not; yea they scoffed, and hated, and persecuted him, and in the end crucified him: you that have seen none of all those things yet having heard the gospel that declares him, *you have believed*.

Thus *observe*, the working, or not working of faith, doth not depend upon the difference of the external ministry and gifts of men: for what greater difference can there be that way, than betwixt the master, and the servants, betwixt the great pro-

[f] Eph. ii.

phet himself, and his weak sinful messengers? and yet many of those that saw, and heard him in person, were not converted, believed not in him; and thousands that never saw him, were converted by his Apostles, and as it seems, even some of those that were some way accessory to his death, yet were brought to repentance by this same Apostle's sermon[g].

Learn then to look above the outward ministry and any difference that in God's dispensation can be there, and know, that if Jesus Christ himself were on earth, and now preaching amongst us, yet might his incomparable words be unprofitable to us, not being mixed with faith in the hearers. But where that is, the meanest and the most despiseable conveyance of his message, received with humility and affection, will work blessed effects.

Whom not seeing yet believing.] Faith elevates the soul not only above sense, and sensible things; but above reason itself. As reason corrects the errors that sense might occasion; so supernatural faith corrects the errors of natural reason, judging according to sense.

The sun seems less than the wheel of a chariot: but reason teaches the philosopher, that it is much bigger than the whole earth, and the cause why it seems so little is, its great distance.

The naturally wise man, is as far deceived by this carnal reason in his estimate of Jesus Christ the *Sun of Righteousness*, and the cause is the same, his great distance from him, as the *Psalmist* speaks of the wicked[h], *Thy judgments are far above out of his sight.* He accounts Christ, and his glory a smaller matter than his own gain, honour, or pleasure; for these are near him, and he sees their quantity to the full, and counts them bigger, yea far more worth than they are indeed. But the Apostle St. *Paul* and all that are enlightened by the same spirit, they know by faith, which is divine reason, that the excellency of Jesus Christ far sur-

[g] Act. ii. [h] Psal. x. 5.

passes the worth of the whole earth, and all things earthly[i].

To give a right assent to the Gospel of Christ is impossible, without divine and saving faith infused in the soul, to believe that the eternal Son of God cloathed himself with human flesh, and dwelt amongst men in a tabernacle like theirs, and suffered death in the flesh, that he who was Lord of life, hath freed us from the sentence of eternal death, that he broke the bars and chains of death, and rose again, that he went up into Heaven, and there at the Father's right hand sits in our flesh, and that glorified above the Angels: this is the *great mystery of Godliness.* And a part of this mystery is, that *he is believed on in the world*[k]. This natural men may discourse of, and that very knowingly, and give a kind of natural credit to it, as to a history that may be true; but firmly to believe, that there is *divine truth* in all these things, and to have a persuasion of it stronger than of the very things we see with our eyes, such an assent as this, is the peculiar work of the Spirit of God, and is certainly saving faith.

The soul that so believes, cannot chuse but love; it is commonly true, the eye is the ordinary door by which love enters into the soul, and it is true in this love; though it is denied of the eye of sense, yet (you see) it is ascribed to the eye of faith, *though you have not seen him you love him, because you believe;* which is to see him spiritually. Faith indeed is distinguished from that vision that is in glory; but it is the vision of the kingdom of grace, it is the eye of the new creature, that quick-sighted eye, that pierces all the visible heavens, and sees above them, that *looks to things that are not seen*[l], and, *is the evidence of things not seen*[m], that *sees him that is invisible*[n]. It is possible that one may be much loved upon the report of his worth and virtues, and upon a picture of him lively drawn, before

[i] Phil. iii. 7, 8. [k] 1 Tim. ii. 16. [l] 2 Cor. iv. 18. [m] Heb. xi. 1. [n] ver. 27.

sight of the party so commended, and represented; but certainly when he is seen, and found answerable to the former, it raises the affection that it first begun, to a far greater height. We have the report of the perfections of Jesus Christ in the Gospel; yea, so clear a description of him, that it gives a picture of him, and that together with the sacraments, are the only lawful, and the only lively pictures of our Saviour[o]. Now faith believes this report, and beholds this picture, and so lets in the love of Christ to the soul; but further it gives a particular experimental knowledge of Christ, and acquaintance with him. It causes the soul to find all that is spoken of him in the word, and his beauty there represented, to be abundantly true, makes it really taste of his sweetness, and by that possesses the heart more strongly with his love, persuading it of the truth of those things, not by reasons, and arguments; but by an inexpressible kind of evidence, that they only know that have it. Faith persuades a christian of these two things, that the *philosopher* gives as the causes of all love, *beauty*, and *propriety*, the loveliness of Christ in himself, and our interest in him.

The former it effectuates not only by the first apprehending, and believing of those his excellencies and beauty, but by frequent beholding of him, and eying him in whom all perfection dwells, and looks so oft on him, till it sets the very impression of his image (as it were) upon the soul that it can never be blotted out, and forgot. The latter it doth by that particular *uniting* act, which makes him our God and our Saviour. We proceed therefore to consider,

2dly, The appropriation of the object, *Ye love.*] The distinctions that some make of *love*, need not be taken as of differing kinds, but different actings of the same love, by which we may try our so much pretended love of Christ, which in truth is so rarely found. There will then be in this love, if it be

[o] Gal. iii. 1.

right, these three qualities, *good-will, delight,* and *desire.*

1*st*, *Good-will*, earnest wishing, and (as we can) promoting God's glory, and stirring up others so to do. They that *seek more their own things than the things of Jesus Christ*, more their own praise and esteem than his, are strangers to this divine love: for *it seeks not her own things.* This bitter root of self-love is most hard to pluck up: this strongest and sweetest love of Christ alone doth it actually, though gradually. This love makes the soul, as the lower Heaven, slow in its own motion, most swift in the motion of that first that wheels it about; so the higher degree of love, the more swift. It loves the hardest tasks and greatest difficulties, where it may perform God service, either in doing or in suffering for him. *It is strong as death, and many waters cannot quench it*[p]. The greater the task is, the more real is the testimony and expression of love, and therefore the more acceptable to God.

2*dly*, There is in true love a complacency and *delight* in God: a conformity to his will; loving what he loves: it is studious of his will, ever seeking to know more clearly, what it is that is most pleasing to him, contracting a likeness to God in all his actions, by conversing with him, frequent contemplating of God, and looking on his beauty. As the eye lets in this affection, so it serves it constantly, and readily looks that way that love directs it. Thus the soul that is possessed with this love of Jesus Christ, the soul which hath its eye much upon him, often thinking on his former sufferings and present glory, the more it looks upon Christ, the more it loves; and still the more it loves, the more it delights to look upon him.

3*dly*, There is in true love a *desire;* for it is but small beginnings and tastes of his goodness that the soul hath here, therefore it is still looking out and longing for the day of marriage; the time is

[p] Eccles. viii. 6, 7.

sad and wearisome, and seems much longer than it is while it is detained here. *I desire to be dissolved* (saith St. *Paul) and to be with Christ*[q].

God is the sum of all things lovely. Thus excellently *Greg. Nazian.* expresseth himself, *Orat.* 1. "If I have any possessions, health, credit, learning, this is all the contentment I have of them, "that I have somewhat I may despise for Christ, "who is *totus desiderabilis, & totum desiderabile.*" And this love is the sum of all he requires of us; it is that which makes all our meanest services acceptable, and without which, all we offer to him is distasteful. God doth not only deserve our love by his matchless excellency and beauty; but by his matchless love to us, and that is the strongest loadstone of love, *He hath loved me*, saith the Apostle[r]. How appears that? in no less than this, *He hath given himself for me.* Certainly then there is no clearer character of our love than this, to give ourselves to him, that hath so loved us, and given himself for us.

This affection must be bestowed somewhere: there is no man but hath some prime choice, somewhat that is the predominant delight of his soul; will it not then be our wisdom to make the worthiest choice? seeing it is offered us, and is extreme folly to reject it.

Grace doth not pluck up by the roots, and wholly destroy the natural passions of the mind, because they are distempered by sin; that were an extreme remedy, to cure by killing, and heal by cutting off: no, but it corrects the distemper in them; it dries not up this main stream of love, but purifies it from the mud it is full of in its wrong course, or calls it to its right channel, by which it may run into happiness, and empty itself into the ocean of goodness. The Holy Spirit turns the love of the soul towards God in Christ, for in that way only can it apprehend his love: so then Jesus Christ is the first *object* of this divine love; he is *medium unionis*,

[q] Philip. i. 23. [r] Gal. ii. 20.

through whom God conveys the sense of his love to the soul, and receives back its love to him.

And if we will consider his incomparable beauty, we may look on it in the holy scriptures, particularly in that divine song of loves, wherein *Solomon* borrows all the beauties of the creatures, dips his pencil in all their several excellencies, to set him forth unto us, who is the *chief of ten thousands.* There is an inseparable intermixture of love with belief, and a pious affection, receiving divine truth; so that in effect, as we distinguish them, they are mutually strengthened, the one by the other, and so though it seem a circle, it is a divine one, and falls not under censure of the school's pedantry. If you ask, how shall I do to *love?* I answer, *believe.* If you ask, how shall I *believe?* I answer, *love.* Although the expressions to a carnal mind are altogether unsavoury, by gross mistaking them; yet to a soul taught to read and hear them, by any measure of that same spirit of love wherewith they were penned, they are full of heavenly and unutterable sweetness.

Many directions, and means of begetting and increasing this love of Christ may be here offered, and they that delight in number may multiply them; but sure this one will comprehend the greatest and best part, if not all of them, *Believe, and you shall love; believe much, and you shall love much;* labour for strong and deep persuasions of the glorious things that are spoken of Christ, and this will command love. Certainly did men indeed believe his worth, they would accordingly love him; for the reasonable creature cannot but affect that most which it firmly believes to be worthy of affection. O! this mischievous unbelief is that which makes the heart cold and dead towards God. Seek then to believe Christ's excellency in himself, and his love to us, and our interest in him, and this will kindle such a fire in the heart as will make it ascend in a sacrifice of love to him.

Many signs likewise of this love may be multiplied, according to the many fruits and workings of it; but in them all, itself is its own most infallible evidence. When the soul finds that all its obedience and endeavour to keep the commands of Jesus Christ, which himself makes its character, do flow from love, then it is true and sincere: for do or suffer what you will, without love all passes for nothing; all are cyphers without it, they signify nothing[s].

This is the message of the gospel, and that which the ministry aims at, and therefore the ministers ought to be suitors, not for themselves, but for Christ, to espouse souls to him, and to bring in many hearts to love him. And certainly this is the most compendious way to persuade to all other christian duties, this is to converse with Jesus Christ; and therefore where his love is, no other incentive will be needful: for love delights in the presence and converse of the party loved. If we are to persuade to duties of the second table, the sum of those is love to our brethren, resulting from the love of Christ, which diffuseth such a sweetness into the soul, that it is all love, and meekness, and gentleness, and long-suffering.

If times be for suffering, love will make the soul not only bear, but welcome the bitterest afflictions of life, and the hardest kinds of death for his sake. In a word, there is in love a sweet constraint, or tying of the heart to all obedience and duty.

The love of God is requisite in ministers for their preaching of the word; so our Saviour to St. *Peter*[t], *Peter, lovest thou me? then feed my lambs.* It is requisite for the people that they receive the truth in the love of it, and that Christ preached may be entertained in the soul, and embraced by faith and love.

You that have made choice of Christ for your love, let not your hearts slip out, to renew your wonted base familiarity with sin; for that will bring new bit-

[s] 1 Cor. xiii. [t] Joh. xxi. 15.

terness to your souls, and at least for some time will deprive you of the sensible favour of your beloved Jesus. Delight always in God, and give him your whole heart; for he deserves it all, and is a satisfying good to it. The largest heart is all of it too strait for the riches of consolation that he brings with him. Seek to increase in this love; and though it is at first weak, yet labour to find it daily rise higher, and burn hotter and clearer, and consume the dross of earthly desires.

Receiving the end of your faith.] Although the soul that believes and loves, is put in present possession of God, as far as it is capable, in its sojourning here; yet it desires a full enjoyment, which it cannot attain to, without removing hence. *While we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord,* saith the Apostle. And because they are assured of that happy exchange, that being untied and freed of this body, they shall be present with the Lord, having his own word for it, that *where he is, they shall be also;* this begets such an assured hope, as bears the name of *Possession.* Therefore it is said here, *Receiving the end of your faith.*

This *receiving* likewise flows from faith. Faith apprehends the present truth of the divine promises, and so makes the things to come present; and hope looks out to their after accomplishment: which if the promises be true, as faith avers, then hope hath good reason firmly to expect. This desire and hope are the very wheels of the soul that carry it on, and faith the common axis on which they rest.

In the words there are two things: 1. The good hoped for, in Christ so believed on and loved. 2. The assuredness of the hope itself, yea it is as sure as if it were already accomplished.

I. As for the good hoped for, it consists, 1. In the nature of it, *viz.* the *salvation of their soul.* 2. In a relative property of it, *the end of their faith.*

1*st*, The nature of it is, *salvation, and salvation of the soul,* it imports full deliverance from all kind of misery, and the safe possession of perfect happi-

ness, when the soul shall be out of the reach of all adversaries, and adverse accidents, no more subjected to those evils that are properly its own, namely, the conscience of sin, and fear of wrath, and sad defections; nor yet subject to those other evils it endured, by society with the body, outward distresses and afflictions, persecutions, poverty, diseases, &c.

It is called *salvation of the soul:* Not excluding the body from the society of that glory, when it shall be raised and reunited to the soul; but because the soul is of itself an immortal substance, and both the more noble part of man, and the prime subject both of grace and glory, and because it arrives first at that blessedness, and for a time leaves the body in the dust to do homage to its original, therefore it is only named here. But Jesus is the Saviour of the body too, and he shall, at his coming, *change our vile bodies, and make them like his glorious body.*

2*dly*, We have the relative property of this hope, the *end of your faith.* The *end*, or *reward;* for it is both. It is the *end*, either at which faith aims, or wherein it ceaseth. It is the *reward*, not of their works, nor of faith, as a work deserving it, but as the condition of the new covenant, which God, according to the tenor of that covenant, first works in his own, and then rewards as if it were their work. And this salvation, or fruition of Christ, is the proper reward of faith, which believes in him unseen, and so obtains that happy sight. It is the proper work of faith to believe what thou seest not, and the reward of faith, to see what thou hast believed.

II. This is the certainty of their hope, that it is as if they had already received it. If the promise of God and the merit of Christ hold good, then they that believe in him, and love him, are made sure of salvation. The promises of God in Christ *are not yea and nay, but they are in him yea, and in him amen.* Sooner may the rivers run backward, and the course of the Heavens change, and the frame of nature be dissolved, than any one soul that is united to Jesus Christ by faith and love can be severed from

him, and so fall short of salvation hoped for in him; and this is the matter of their rejoicing.

Ye rejoice with joy unspeakable.] *The natural man* (says the Apostle) *receiveth not the things of God, for they are foolishness unto him*; and he adds the reason why he cannot know them, *for they are spiritually discerned.* He hath none of that faculty by which they are discerned. There is a vast disproportion betwixt those things and nature's highest capacity, it cannot work beyond its sphere. Speak to the natural man of the matter of spiritual grief, the sense of guiltiness, and the apprehension of God's displeasure, or the hiding of his favour and the light of his countenance from the soul; these things stir not him, he knows not what they mean. Speak to him again of the peace of conscience, and sense of God's love, and the joy that arises hence; he is no less a stranger to that. *Mourn to him, and he laments not; pipe to him, and he dances not*, as our Saviour speaks[u]. But, as it there follows, there is a wisdom in those things, though they seem folly and nonsense to the foolish world, and this *wisdom is justified of her own children*[x].

Having said somewhat already of the causes of this spiritual joy, which the Apostle here speaks of, it remains that we consider those two things, 1. How joy ariseth from those causes. 2. The excellency of this joy, as it is here expressed.

1. There is here a solid sufficient good, and the heart made sure of it, being partly put in present possession of it, and in a most certain hope of all the rest. And what more can be required to make it joyful? Jesus Christ the treasure of all blessings, received and united to the soul, by faith and love and hope.

Is not Christ the light and joy of the nation? such a light as *Abraham*, at the distance of many ages, of more than two thousand years, yet saw by faith, and seeing, rejoiced. Besides this brightness, that makes light a joyful object, light is often in Scrip-

[u] Matth. xi. 17. [x] ver. 19.

ture put for joy. Christ this light brings salvation with him, he is the *Sun of Righteousness*, and there is *healing under his wings*. *I bring you*, said the angel, *good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all people*. And their song hath in it the matter of that joy, *Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will toward men*[y].

But to the end we may rejoice in Christ, we must find him ours, otherwise the more excellent he is, the more cause hath the heart to be sad, while it hath no portion in him; *My spirit hath rejoiced* (said the blessed virgin) *in God my Saviour*[z].

Thus[a], having spoken of our communion with Christ, the Apostle adds, *These things I write, that your joy may be full*. Faith worketh this joy, by uniting the soul to Christ, and applying his merits; and from that application arises the pardon of sin. And so that load of misery, which was the great cause of sorrow, is removed; and so soon as the soul finds itself lightned and unloaded of that burden that was sinking it to hell, it cannot chuse but leap for joy, in the ease and refreshment it finds. Therefore that Psalm that *David* begins with the doctrine of the pardon of sin, he ends with an exhortation to *rejoicing*. *Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered*[b], thus he begins; but he ends[c], *Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice ye righteous, and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart*. St. *Peter* speaks to his hearers of the remission of sins[d], and[e] it is added, *They received his words gladly*: And our Saviour joins these two together, *Be of good comfort, thy sins are forgiven thee*. Thus[f], good tidings of liberty to captives are proclaimed, and a notable change there is of their estate *who mourn in Zion, giving them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness*. Think with what joy the long imprisoned debtor, drowned in debt, receives a full discharge, and his liberty;

[y] Luke ii. 10, 14. [z] Luke i. 47. [a] 1 Joh. i. 3. [b] Psal. xxxii. 1. [c] v. 11. [d] Act. ii. 38. [e] v. 41. [f] Isa. lxi. 1.

or a condemned malefactor the news of his pardon, and this will somewhat resemble it; but yet fall far short of the joy that faith brings, by bringing Christ to the soul, and so forgiveness of sins in him.

But this is not all. This believing soul is not only a debtor acquitted and set free, but enriched besides with a new and great estate; not only a pardoned malefactor, but withal highly preferred and advanced to honour, having a right by the promises *to the unsearchable riches of Christ*, as the Apostle speaks, and is received into favour with God, and unto the dignity of sonship, taken *from the dunghill, and set with princes*[s].

As there is joy from faith, so also from love. Though it is in itself the most sweet and delightful passion of the soul, yet as we foolishly misplace it, it proveth often full of bitterness; but being set upon Jesus Christ, the only right and worthy object, it causeth this unspeakable delight and rejoicing.

1*st*, It is matter of joy to have bestowed our love so worthily; and though our Saviour seems to withdraw himself, and sometimes sadden the soul that loves him with *absences*, in regard of sense; yet even in those sad times, the soul delights to love him, and there is a pleasure in the very pains it hath in seeking after him. And this it knows, that his mercies are everlasting, and that he cannot be long unkind, but will return and speak comfortably unto it.

2*dly*, Our love to Christ gives us assurance of his to us; so that we have not only chosen worthily, but shall not be frustrate and disappointed, and it assures us of his, not as following, but preceding and causing ours: for our love to Jesus Christ is no other but the reflex of his on us. *Wine maketh glad the heart;* but *thy love is better than wine*, saith the spouse. And having this persuasion, that he *hath loved us, and washed us in his blood*, and forgets us not in our conflicts, that though he himself is in his glory, yet that he intercedes for us there, and will bring us thither, what condition can befal us so hard,

[s] Psal. cxiii. 8.

but we may rejoice in it? And in them, so far as we are sure to arrive at that full salvation and fruition of him who hath purchased it.

Then there is the *third* cause of our rejoicing, *viz.* our *hope*. Now hope is our *anchor fixed within the vail*, that stays us against all the storms that beat upon us in this troublesome sea that we are tossed upon. The soul that strongly believes and loves, may confidently hope to see what it believeth, and enjoy what it loves, and in that rejoice. It may say, whatsoever hazards, whether outward or inward, whatsoever afflictions and temptations I endure, yet this one thing puts me out of hazard, and in that I will rejoice, the salvation of my soul depends not upon my own strength, but is in my Saviour's hand, *My life is hid with Christ in God; and when he who is my life shall appear, I likewise shall appear with him in glory.* The childish world is hunting shadows, and gaping and hoping after they know not what; but the believer can say, I know whom I have trusted, and am persuaded that *he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.* Now we have not only right to those things, but withal there must be frequent consideration of them to work joy. The soul must often view them, and so rejoice: *My meditation of him shall be sweet*, saith *David*. *I will be glad in the Lord*[h]. And the godly failing in this, deprive themselves much of that joy they might have; and they that are most in these sublime thoughts have the highest and truest joy.

2. The excellency of this joy the Apostle here expresseth, by these two words, *unspeakable*, and *full of glory*.

That it is *unspeakable*, no wonder, seeing the matter of it is inconceivable, it is an infinite good. God reconciled in Jesus Christ, and testifying and sealing his love unto the soul, and giving assured hope of that blessed vision of eternity, what more unspeakable than this? And for the same reason it is *glori-*

[h] Psal. civ. 34.

ous, or glorified joy; having the highest and most glorious object; for it derives all its excellency from thence,

Unspeakable.] The best worldly joys are easily speakable; they may be expressed to the utmost, yea usually more is spoke of them than they are indeed. Their name is beyond their worth; they are very seldom found upon experience equal to the opinion and expectation that men have of them. But this spiritual joy is above the report any can make of it, say what they can of it who are of happiest expression; yet when a man comes to know it in his own breast, he will say (as that queen said of *Solomon's* wisdom) *the half was not told me of it.*

Again, earthly joys are inglorious; many of which, men are ashamed of, and those that seem most plausible, yet are below the excellency of the soul, and cannot fill it: but the joys that arise from union with Christ, as they are most avowable, a man needs not blush to own them, so they are truly contenting and satisfying, and that is their glory, and the cause why we may glory in them; *My soul shall make her boast in God*, says *David*[i].

For *application* of all this. If these things were believed, we should hearken no more to the foolish prejudice that the world hath taken up against religion, and wherewith Satan endeavours to possess men's hearts, that they may be scarred from the ways of holiness: they think it a sour melancholy life, that hath nothing but sadness and mourning in it. But to remove this prejudice,

Consider, 1. Religion bars not the lawful delights that are taken in natural things, but teaches the moderate and regular use of them, which is far the sweeter; for things lawful in themselves are in their excess sinful, and so prove bitterness in the end; and if in some cases it requires the forsaking of lawful enjoyments, as of pleasure, or profits, or honour, for God and for his glory, it is generous, and more truly delightful to deny them for this reason, than

[i] Psal. xxxiv. 2.

to enjoy them. Men have done much this way for the love of their country, and by a principle of moral virtue; but to lose any delight, or to suffer any hardship for that highest end, the glory of God and by the strength of love to him, is far more excellent, and truly pleasant.

2. The delights and pleasures of sin, religion indeed banishes, but it is to change them for this joy that is unspeakably beyond them: it calls men from sordid and base delights to those that are pure delights indeed; it calls to men, Drink ye no longer of the puddle, here are the crystal streams of a living fountain. There is a delight in the very despising impure delights; as he said, *How pleasant is it to want these pleasures*[k]? But for such a change, to have in their stead such delights, as in comparison the other deserve not that name; to have such spiritual joy as shall end in eternal joy, it is a wonder we hasten not all to chuse this joy; but it is indeed because we believe it not.

3. It is true, the godly are subject to great distresses and afflictions; but their joy is not extinguished by those, no, nor diminished neither, but often sensibly increased. When they have least of the world's joy, they abound most in spiritual consolations, and then relish them best. They find them sweetest, when their taste is not depraved with earthly enjoyments, *We rejoice in tribulation*, says St. *Paul*; and here our Apostle insists on that, to verify the substance of this joy in the midst of the greatest afflictions.

4. Spiritual grief, that seems most opposite to this spiritual joy, excludeth it not, for there is a secret delight and sweetness in the tears of repentance, a balm in them that refreshes the soul, and even their saddest kind of mourning, *viz.* the dark times of desertion hath this in it, that is some way sweet, that those mournings after their beloved, who absents himself, are a mark of their love to him, and a true evidence of it, and then all these spiritual sor-

[k] Quàm suave est istis suavitatibus carere? AUG.

rows, of what nature soever, are turned into spiritual joy; that is the proper end of them; they have a natural tendency that way.

5. But the natural man still doubts of this joy we speak of; because he sees and hears so little of it from them that profess to have it, and seem to have best right to it. If we consider the wretchedness of this life, and especially the abundance of sin that is in the world, what wonder though this their joy retire much inward, and appear little abroad, where all things are so contrary to it, and so few are capable of it, to whom it were pertinent to vent it. Again, we see here, it is *unspeakable*; it were a poor thing if he that hath it could tell it all out[l]. And when the soul hath most of it, then it remains most within itself, and is so inwardly taken up with it, that possibly it can then least of all express it. It is with joys, as they say of cares and griefs, *Leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent*. The deepest waters run stillest. True joy is a solid grave thing[m], dwells more in the heart than the countenance: whereas on the contrary, base and false joys are but superficial, skin-deep (as we say;) they are all in the face.

Think not that it is with the godly, as the prophet says of the wicked, that *there is no peace* to them; and the *Septuagint* reads it, *no joy*. Certainly it is true; there is no true joy to the wicked: they may revel and make a noise, but they rejoice not; *the laughter of the fool is as the crackling of thorns under the pot*, a great noise but little heat, and soon at an end. There is no continuing feast, but that of *a good conscience*. Wickedness and real joy cannot dwell together, as the very moralist *Seneca* hath it often, and at large: but he that can say, The righteousness of Jesus Christ is mine, and in him the favour of God, and the hope of eternal happiness, hath such a light as can shine in the darkest dungeon, yea in the *dark valley of the shadow of death itself*.

[l] Pauperis est numerare pecus.

[m] Res severa est verum gaudium. SEN.

Say not thou, if I betake myself to the way of godliness, I must bid farewell to gladness; never a merry day more; no, on the contrary, never a truly joyful day till then, yea, no days at all, but night to the soul, till it entertain Jesus Christ, and his kingdom, which consists in those, *righteousness, peace,* and *joy in the Holy Ghost.* Thou dost not sacrifice *Isaac,* which signifies laughter (as St. *Bern.*) but a ram; not thy joy, but filthy sinful delights that end in sorrow.

Oh! seek to know in your experience what those joys mean, for all describing and commending them to you will not make you understand them, but *taste, and see that the Lord is good:* you cannot see and know this goodness, but by tasting it [n]; and having tasted it, all those poor joys you thought sweet before, will then be bitter and distasteful to you.

And you that have Christ yours by believing, know your happiness, and rejoice, and glory in it. Whatsoever is your outward condition, *rejoice always, and again I say rejoice* [o], for *light is sown to the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart* [p].

Ver. 10. *Of which salvation the prophets have enquired, and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you.*

11. *Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when he testified before hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.*

12. *Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven, which things the Angels desire to look into.*

It is the ignorance, or at least the inconsideration of divine things, that makes earthly things, whether

[n] Lauda mellis dulcedinem quantum potes, qui non gustaverit, non intelliget. Aug.

[o] Philip. iv. 4. [p] Psal. xcvii. 11.

good, or evil, appear great in our eyes: therefore the Apostle's great aim is, by representing the certainty and excellency of the belief and hope of christians to his afflicted brethren, to strengthen their minds against all discouragements and oppositions; that they may account nothing too hard to do or suffer, for so high a cause, and so happy an end. It is the low and mean thoughts, and the shallow persuasion we have of things that are spiritual, that is the cause of all our remissness and coldness in them. The doctrine of salvation, mentioned in the former verse, as the end of our christian faith, is illustrated in these words, from its antiquity, dignity, and infallible truth.

It is no modern invention; for the prophets enquired after it, and foretold it in former ages from the beginning. Thus the prejudice of novelty is removed, that usually meets the most ancient truth in its new discoveries.

Again, it is no mean thing that such men as were of unquestioned eminency in wisdom and holiness did so much study and search after; and having found it out, were careful not only to publish it in their own times, but to record it to posterity; and this not by the private motion of their own spirits, but by the acting and guidance of the Spirit of God, which likewise sets the truth of their testimony above all doubtfulness and uncertainty.

But taking those three verses entirely together, we have in them these three things, testifying how excellent the doctrine of the gospel is, 1. We have the principal author of it. 2. The matter of it. 3. The worth of those that are exercised about it, *viz*, the best of men, the prophets and apostles, in administering it, and the best of all the creatures, the angels, in admiring it.

I. The first author is the absolutely *first*, the Spirit of God in the prophets[q], in the apostles[r]. But the Spirit of Christ there, is the same spirit that he sent down on his disciples after his ascending to

[q] v. 11. [r] v. 12. [s] v. 11.

glory, and which spoke in his prophets before his descending to the earth. It is the Spirit of Christ, proceeding jointly from him with the Father, as he is the Son of God, and dwelling most richly and fully in him as the Son of Man.

The Holy Ghost is in himself holiness, and the source and worker of holiness, and author of this holy doctrine that breathes nothing but holiness, and urges it most pressingly upon all that receive it.

This is the very life of divine faith, touching the mysteries of salvation, firmly to believe their *Revelation* by the Spirit of God. This the word itself testifies, as we see, and it is really manifest in it; it carries the lively stamp of divine inspiration, but there must be a spiritual eye to discern it. He that is blind knows not that the sun shines at noon, but by the report of others; but they that see, are assured they see it, and assured by no other thing, but by its own light. To ask one that is a true believer, How know you the scriptures to be divine? is the same as to ask him, How know you light to be light?

The soul is nothing but darkness and blindness within, till that same spirit that shines without in the word, shine likewise within it, and effectually make it light; but that once done, then is the word read with some measure of the same spirit by which it was written, and the soul is ascertained that it is divine, as in bodily sight, there must be a meeting of inward light, *viz.* the visual spirits with the outward *object*.

The Spirit of God within, brings evidence with it, and makes it self-discernible in the word; this all arguments, all books and study cannot attain unto. *It is given to believe*[t].

No man knows the things of a man, but the spirit of man[u]. But how holds that here? For if a man speak out the things that are in his spirit, then others may know them; but the Apostle's aim there is, to conclude that the things of God, even such

[t] Philip. i. 29. [u] 1 Cor. ii. 11.

as were revealed in his word, could not be known but by his own Spirit; so that though revealed, yet they remain still unrevealed, till the Spirit teach within, as well as without; because they are intelligible by none, but by those that are the private scholars and hearers of the Holy Ghost, the author of them; and because there are so few of these, therefore there is so little real believing amongst all the noise and profession that we make of it. Who is there (if you will believe them) that believes not? And yet truly there is too much cause to continue the Prophet's regret, *Who hath believed our report*[x].

Learn then to suspect yourselves, and to find out your own unbelief, that you may desire this spirit to teach you inwardly those great mysteries that he outwardly reveals, and teaches by his word. Make use of that promise, and press the Lord with it, *They shall be all taught of God*[y].

But, II. There is here the *matter* of this doctrine which we have in three several expressions, 1. That which is repeated from the foregoing verse, it is the *Doctrine of salvation*, that is the end of it. 2. The *Doctrine of the sufferings and glory of Christ*, as the means. And 3. The *Doctrine of grace*, the spring of both.

1. It is the doctrine of *salvation*, the only true doctrine of true happiness, which the wisest of natural men have groped and sought after with much earnestness, but with no success: they had no other than the dark moon-light of nature, and that is not sufficient to find it out; only the Sun of Righteousness shining in the sphere of the Gospel *brings life and immortality to light*[z]. No wonder that natural wisdom, the deepest of it, is far from finding out the true method and way of cure, seeing it cannot discover the disease of miserable mankind, *viz.* the sinful and wretched condition of nature by the first disobedience.

Salvation expresses not only that which is nega-

[x] Isa. liii. 1. [y] Isa. liv. 13. and Joh. vi. 45. [z] 2 Tim. i. 10.

tive; but implies likewise positive and perfect happiness: thus forgiveness of sins is put for the whole nature of justification frequently in scripture. It is more easy to say of this unspeakable happiness, what it is not, than what it is. There is in it a full and final freedom from all annoyance; all tears are wiped away, and their fountain is dried up; all feeling and fear, or danger of any the least evil, either of sin or punishment, is banished for ever; there are no invasions of enemies, no robbing or destroying in all this holy mountain, no voice of complaining in the streets of the new *Jerusalem.* Here it is at the best but interchanges of mornings of joy, with sad evenings of weeping: but there, there shall be no light, no need of sun nor moon, *For the glory of the Lord shall lighten it, and the Lamb shall be the light thereof*[a].

Well may the Apostle, (as he doth here throughout this Chapter) lay this salvation to counter-balance all sorrows and persecutions, and whatsoever hardships can be in the way to it. The soul that is persuaded of this, in the midst of storms and tempests, enjoys a calm, triumphs in disgraces, grows richer by all its losses; and, by death itself, attains this immortal life.

Happy are they that have their eye fixed upon this salvation, and are longing and waiting for it, that see so much of that brightness and glory, as darkens all the lustre of earthly things to them, and makes them trample upon those things which formerly they admired and doated on with the rest of the foolish world. Those things we account so much of, are but as rotten wood, or glow-worms that shine only in the night of our ignorance and vanity: so soon as the light beam of this salvation enters into the soul, it cannot much esteem or affect any thing below it; and if those glances of it that shine in the word, and in the soul of a christian, be so bright and powerful, what then shall the full sight and real possession of it be?

[a] Rev. xxi. 23.

2. The Gospel is represented as the *Doctrine of the sufferings and glory of Christ, as the means of salvation.* The worker of this salvation, whom the prophets and Apostles make the sum of all their doctrine, is Jesus Christ, and the sum of that work of redemption (as we have it here) is his humiliation and exaltation; his sufferings, and the glory that followed thereupon. Now, though this serve as an encouragement to christians in their sufferings, that this is the way by which their Lord went into his glory, and is true also of Christ mystical, the head with the members, as the scriptures often teach us; yet I conceive it is here mainly intended as a summary of the work of our redemption by Jesus Christ, relating to the salvation mentioned, ver. 10. and as the cause for the effect, so it is put for it here. The Prophets enquired, and prophesied of that salvation. How? By searching out, and foretelling the sufferings and glory of Christ: his sufferings then, and his after glories are our salvation. His sufferings is the purchase of our salvation, and his glory is our assurance of it, he as our head having triumphed, and being crowned, makes us likewise sure of victory and triumph. His having entered on the possession of glory, makes our hope certain; this is his prayer, *That where he is, there we may be also*, and this his own assertion, *The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them*[b], this is his promise, *Because I live ye shall live also*[c]. Christ and the believer are one; this is that great mystery the Apostle speaks of[d]. Though it is a common known truth, the words and outside of it obvious to all, yet none can understand it but they that indeed partake of it. By virtue of that union, their sins were accounted his, and Christ's sufferings are accounted theirs, and by consequence, his glory, the consequent of his sufferings, is likewise theirs; there is an indissoluble connection betwixt the life of Christ, and of a believer, *Our life is hid with Christ in God;* and therefore while we remain there, our life

[b] Joh. xvii. 22. 24. [c] Joh. xiv. 19. [d] Eph. v. 30. 32.

is there, though hid, *and when he who is our life shall appear, we likewise shall appear with him in glory*[e]. Seeing the sufferings and glory of our Redeemer are the main subject of the Gospel, and the causes of our salvation, and our comfortable persuasion of it, it is a wonder that they are not more the matter of our thoughts. Should we not daily consider the bitterness of that cup of wrath he drunk for us, and be wrought to repentance and hatred of sin, to have sin imbittered to us by that consideration, and find the sweetness of his love in that he did drink it, and by that, be deeply possessed with love to him? These things we now and then speak of, but they sink not into our minds, as our Saviour exhorts, where he is speaking of those same sufferings. O! that they were engraven on our hearts, and that sin were crucified in us, *and the world crucified to us, and we unto the world by the cross of Christ*[f].

And let us be frequently considering the glory wherein he is, and have our eye often upon that, and our hearts solacing and refreshing themselves frequently with the thoughts of that place and condition wherein Christ is, and where our hopes are ere long to behold him; both to see his glory, and to be glorified with him, is it not reason? Yea it is necessary; it cannot be otherwise, if *our treasure, and Head be there, that our hearts be there likewise*[g].

The third expression here of the Gospel is, That *it is the doctrine of grace.* The work of redemption itself, and the several parts of it, and the doctrine revealing it, have all the name of grace; because they all flow from free grace; that is their spring and first cause.

And it is this wherein the doctrine of salvation is mainly comfortable, that it is free, *Ye are saved by grace*[h]. It is true God requires faith, it is through faith; but he that requires that gives it too; *That*

[e] Colos. iii. 3, 4. [f] Galat. vi. 14. [g] Matth. vi. 21. Col. iii. 1, 2. [h] Eph. ii. 8.

is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God[i]. It is wonderful grace to save upon believing; believe in Jesus for salvation, and live accordingly, and it is done; there is no more required to thy pardon, but that thou receive it by faith. But truly nature cannot do this; it is as impossible for us of ourselves to believe, as to do. This then is that which makes it all grace from beginning to end, that God not only saves upon believing, but gives believing itself. Christ is called not only the *Author and finisher* of our salvation, but even *of our faith*[k].

Free grace being rightly apprehended, is that which stays the heart in all estates, and keeps it from fainting, even in its saddest times; what though there is nothing in myself but matter of sorrow and discomfort? It cannot be otherwise; it is not from myself that I look for comfort at any time; but from my God, and his free grace. Here is comfort enough for all times; when I am at the best, I ought not, I dare not rely upon myself; when I am at the worst, I may, and should rely upon Christ, and his sufficient grace. Though I be the vilest sinner that ever came to him, yet I know he is more gracious than I am sinful; yea, the more my sin is, the more glory will it be to his grace to pardon it; it will appear the richer: doth not *David* argue thus[l], *For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity for it is great:* but it is an empty fruitless notion of grace, to consider it only in the general, and in a wandering way. We are to look upon it particularly, as addressed to us, and it is not enough that it comes to us, in the message of him that brings it only to our ear, but that we may know what it is, it must come into us, then it is ours indeed; but if it come to us in the message only, and we send it away again, if it shall so depart, we had better never have heard of it; it will leave a guiltiness behind it, that shall make all our sins weigh much heavier than before.

[i] Eph. ii. 8. [k] Heb. xii. 2. [l] Psal. xxv. 11.

Enquire whether you have entertained this grace or not, whether it be come to you, and into you, or not; whether the *kingdom of God is within you,* as our Saviour speaks[m]. It is the most woeful condition that can be, not to be far from the kingdom of God, and yet to fall short, and miss of it. The grace of God revealed in the Gospel, is intreating you daily to receive it, is willing to become yours, if you reject it not. Were your eyes open to behold the beauty and excellency of this grace, there would need no deliberation; yea, you would endure none: desire your eyes to be opened, and enlightened from above, that you may know it, and your hearts opened, that you may be happy by receiving it.

The Apostle speaking of Jesus Christ, as the foundation of our faith, calls him *the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*[n]. *Yesterday,* under the law, *to day,* in those primitive times, nearest his incarnation, and *for ever,* in all succeeding ages. And the resemblance holds good between the two Cherubims over the mercy-seat, and the two testaments; *those* had their faces towards one another, and both toward the mercy-seat; and *these* look to one another in their doctrine, agreeing perfectly; and both look to Christ the true mercy-seat, and the great subject of the scriptures. This we see here, the things that the prophets foretold to come, and the Apostles reported were accomplished, were the same, and from the same spirit, they were the *sufferings of Christ,* and *his after glory,* and in them our salvation by free grace. The prophecies look forward to the times of the Gospel; and the things then fulfilled, look back to the prophecies; and each confirms the other, meeting all in Christ, who is their truth and center.

We have spoken already of the author, and subject of this salvation. Now we come to say something, III. Concerning the worth of those who are employed about it, as well in administring to it, as in admiring it. And those are, the prophets and

[m] Luke xvii. 21. [n] Heb. xiii. 8.

Apostles; the first foretold what was to come, the second preached them when they came to pass.

In the prophets there are three things here remarked, 1. Their diligence. 2. The success of it. 3. The extent of its usefulness.

1. This their diligence disparages not their extraordinary visions and revelations, and that which is added, that the Spirit of Christ was in them, and did foretel the things to come.

It was their constant duty, and they being sensible of their duty, made it their constant exercise, to search into divine mysteries by meditation, and prayer; yea, and by reading such holy writers as were already extant in their times, as Daniel ix. 3. x. 11. For which cause, some taking the word actively, conceive *Daniel*, to be called there a *man of desires*, because of his great desire, and diligent search after the knowledge of those high things. And in this diligent way, they constantly waited for these revelations, which sometimes, when it seemed good unto the Spirit of God, were imparted unto them.

"Prophecy resideth not (say the *Hebrew* doctors) "but in a man that is great in wisdom and virtue, "whose affections overcome him not in any worldly "things; but by his knowledge, he overcometh "his affections continually; on such a man the "Holy Spirit cometh down, and his soul is asso- "ciated to the angels, and he is changed to another "man." Thus *Maimonides*.

It was the way of the prince of darkness amongst the idolatrous Gentiles, to speak either through senseless statues, or where he uttered his oracles, by such prophane prophets as he had, to cause them in a fury to mumble forth words which they understood not, and knew not what they said. But the Spirit of God being light, and the holy prophets inspired with it, they being diligent attendants on its motions, and searchers of the mysteries of salvation, understood well what their business was, and to what purpose those things of the kingdom of

Christ tended, which they by inspiration did foretel; and therefore bended their thoughts this way, praying, and searching, and waiting for answers, studying to keep the passage, as it were open, for the beams of those divine revelations to come in at; not to have their spirits clogged, and stopt with earthly and sinful affections, endeavouring for that calm and quiet composure of spirit, in which the voice of God's Spirit might be the better heard[p]. In both which places follows an excellent prophecy concerning Christ, and that salvation which he wrought for his people.

Were the prophets not exempted from the pains of search and enquiry, that had the Spirit of God not only in a high measure, but after a singular manner? How unbeseeming then is slothfulness and idleness in us? Whether is it, that we judge ourselves advantaged with more of the Spirit than those holy men? Or that we esteem the doctrine, and mysteries of salvation on which they bestowed so much of their labour, unworthy of ours? These are both so gross, that we will be loth to own either of them; and yet our laziness, and negligence in searching after those things, seems to charge us with some such thought as one of those.

You will say, this concerns those that succeed to the work of the prophets, and Apostles in ordinary, the ministers of the gospel. And it doth indeed fall first upon them. It is their task indeed to be diligent, and as the Apostle exhorts his *Timothy, to attend on reading*[q], but above all to study to have much experimental knowledge of God, and his Son Jesus Christ; and for this end, to disentangle, and free themselves as much as is possible, from lower things to the search of heavenly mysteries[r]. As they are called angels, so ought they to be, as much as they can attain to it, in a constant nearness unto God, and attendance on him, like unto the angels, and look much into these things, as the angels here are said to do; to endeavour to have their

[p] Psal. lxxxv. 8. and Hab. ii. 1. [q] 1 Tim. iv. 13. [r] Prov. xviii. 1.

souls purified from the affections of sin, that the light of divine truth may shine clear in them, and not be fogged, and misted with filthy vapours; to have the impressions of God clearly written in their breasts, not mixed and blurred with earthly characters, seasoning all their readings and common way of studies with much prayer, and divine meditation. They that converse most with the king, and are inward with him, know most of the affairs of state, and even the secrets of them, that are hid from others: and certainly those of God's messengers that are oftenest with himself, cannot but understand their business best, and know most of his meaning, and the affairs of his kingdom. And to that end it is confessed, that singular diligence is required in them; but seeing the Lord hath said without exception, that *his secret is with them that fear him*[s], and that he will reveal himself and his saving truths to those that humbly seek them; do not any of you to yourselves so much injury, as to bar yourselves from sharing in your measure of the search of these same things, that were the study of the prophets, and which by their study, and publishing them, are made the more accessible, and easy to us. Consider that they do concern us universally, if we would be saved; for it is salvation here that they studied. *Search the scriptures*, says our Saviour, and that is the motive, if there can be any that may be thought in reason pressing enough, or if we do indeed think so, *For in them ye think to have eternal life*, and it is there to be found. Christ is this *salvation* and that *eternal life;* and he adds further, *it is they* (those scriptures) *that testify of me*[t]. These are the golden mines in which alone the abiding treasures of eternity are to be found, and therefore worthy all the digging, and pains we can bestow on them.

Besides their *industry* in this enquiry, and *search*, there is here expressed their ardent affection to the thing they prophesied of, and their longings, and

[s] Psal. xxv. 14. [t] John v. 39.

wishes for its accomplishment, *viz.* the coming of Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, the top of all their desires, the great hope and the light of *Israel.* No wonder they *desired his day*, that had so much *joy in the seeing it:* so far off, as over the head almost of two thousand years, faith overlooking them, and foreseeing it so in *Abraham*, his heart danced for joy[u], Abraham *saw my day and rejoiced.*

And this is conceived to be the meaning of those expressions in that mystical song, as they suit those times of the Jewish church, breathing out her longings for the coming of her beloved. His speaking by the prophets, was his voice as afar off; but his incarnation was his coming near, and kissing his church, *with the kisses of his mouth*[x], and to omit other expressions throughout the song, the last chapter, verse 1, is tender and pathetical, *Oh! that thou wert as my brother*, &c. and the last words of it, *Make haste my beloved, and be thou like a roe, or a young hart upon the mountain of spices.* And when this salvation came in the fulness of time, we see how joyfully good old *Simeon* embraces it, and thought he had seen enough, and therefore upon the sight desired to have his eyes closed, *Now let thy servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen thy salvation*[y]. Therefore our Saviour says to his Apostles[z], *Blessed are your eyes for they see, for many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them.* This is he whom we disesteem and make so small account of, being now so clearly revealed that they studied, and sought, and wished so much for, so many ages before.

2dly, The *success* of their search is remarked: in seeking they found the certainty; and the time of his coming, they sought out till they found: and then they prophesied of that salvation, and

[u] John viii. 56. [x] Cant. chap. i. ver. 1. [y] Luke ii. 29, 30.
[z] Matth. xiii. 16.

grace; *they searched what*, and *what manner of time*, and the Spirit did manifestly foretel it them.

They sought to know *what manner of time* it should come to pass, *viz.* in a time of great distress, and bad estate of the people, as all the prophets testify, and particularly that place[a], gives an express character of the time, though there be some diversity of exposition of the particular words, yet the main sense is agreed on by all sound interpreters, and the *Chaldee paraphrase* hath it expressly, that that *Shiloh*, is the Messiah.

And of his sufferings, and after-glories they prophecied very clearly[b]. And our Saviour himself makes use of their testimony in both these points[c].

III. There is the benefit of their search and finding, in the extent of it[d], to the believers in the apostles times, and to the succeeding christian church, and so to us in these days; but in some peculiar sense the prophets ministred to the people of those times, wherein Christ did suffer, and enter into glory; for that they were the first that enjoyed the accomplishment of those prophecies, they being fulfilled in their own days.

The prophets knew well that the things they prophesied were not to be fulfilled in their own times, and therefore in their prophecying concerning them, though both themselves, and people of God that were contemporary with them did reap the comfort of that doctrine, and were by faith partakers of the same salvation, and so it was to themselves as well as of us, yet in regard of the accomplishment, they knew it was not to themselves, it was not to be brought to pass in their days; and therefore speaking of the glory of Christ's kingdom, they often foretel it for *the latter days*, as their phrase is. And as we have the things they prophesied of, so we have this peculiar benefit of their prophecies, that their suiting so perfectly with the event, and performance, serves much to confirm our christian faith.

[a] Gen. xlix. 10. [b] Psm. xxii. Isa. liii. &c. [c] Luke xxiv. 25—27. [d] verse 12.

There is a foolish, and miserable way of verifying this, men ministring the doctrine of salvation to others and not to themselves, carrying it all in their heads and tongues, and none of it in their hearts; not hearing it even while they preach it, reaching the bread of life to others, and eating none of it themselves. And this the apostle says, that he was most careful to avoid, and therefore dealt severely with his body, that it might not this way endanger his soul, *I beat down my body*, says he, *and keep it in subjection, lest when I have preached to others I myself should be a cast-away*[d]. It is not in this sense, that the prophets ministered to others, and not to themselves. No, they had joy and comfort in the very hopes of the Redeemer to come, and the belief of the things that any others had spoke, and that themselves spoke concerning him. And thus the true preachers of the gospel, though their ministerial gifts are for the use of others, yet that salvation they preach, they lay hold on, and partake of themselves, as your boxes wherein perfumes are kept for garments, and other uses, are themselves perfumed by keeping them.

We see how the prophets ministred it, as the never-failing consolation of the church in those days, in all their distresses; it is a wonder when they are foretelling either the sorrows and afflictions, or temporal restorement, and deliverances of that people of the Jews, what sudden outleaps they will make to speak of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and the days of the gospel, insomuch that he who considers not the spirit they were moved by, would think it were incoherence, and impertinency; but they knew well what they meant, that *those news* were never unseasonable, nor besides the purpose, that the sweetness of those thoughts, *viz.* the consideration of the Messiah, was able (to such as believed) to allay the bitterest distresses, and that the great deliverance he was to work, was the top and sum of all deliverances. Thus their prophecies of him were present comfort to themselves, and other believers then; and further,

[d] 1 Cor. ix. 27.

were to serve for a clear evidence of the divine truth of those mysteries in the days of the gospel, in and after their fulfilling.

This sweet stream of their doctrine did, as the rivers, make its own banks fertile, and pleasant as it ran by, and flowed still forward to after ages, and by the confluence of more such prophecies, grew greater as it went, till it fell in with the main current of the gospel in the New Testament, both acted, and preached by the great prophet himself, (whom they foretold *to come*), and recorded by his apostles and evangelists, and thus united into one river, clear as crystal. This doctrine of salvation in the scriptures, hath still refreshed the city of God, his church under the gospel, and still shall do so, till it empty itself into the ocean of eternity.

The first discovery we have of this stream nearest its source, the eternal purpose of divine mercy, is in that promise which the Lord himself preached in few words, to our first parents, that had newly made themselves and their race miserable, *The seed of the woman shall break the head of the serpent*[e].

The agreement of their predictions with the things themselves, and the preaching of the apostles following, the other kind of men employed in this salvation make up one organ or great instrument, tuned by the same hand, and sounding by the same breath of the Spirit of God, and that is exprest here, as the common authority of the doctrine in both, and the cause of their harmony and agreement in it.

All these extraordinary *gifts of the Holy Ghost*, the calling *of prophets and apostles and evangelists*, and the ordinary ministry of the gospel *by pastors and teachers*, tends to that great design that God hath in *building his church*, making up that great assembly of all the elect, to enjoy and praise him for all eternity[f]. For this end sent he his Son out of his bosom, and for this end sends he forth his messengers to divulge that salvation that his Son hath

[e] Gen. iii. 15. [f] Eph. iv. 11.

wrought, and sends down his Spirit upon them, that they may be fitted for so high a service. Those cherubim wonder how guilty man escapes their flaming swords, and re-enters paradise. The angels see that their companions that fell are not restored, but their room filled up with the spirits of just men, and they envy it not; *which mystery the angels desire to look into;* and this is added in the close of these words for the extolling of it.

The angels look upon what they have seen already fulfilled with delight and admiration, and what remains, namely, the full accomplishment of this great work in the end of time, they look upon, with desire to see it finished; it is not a slight glance they take of it, but they fix their eye, and look stedfastly on it, viz. That mystery of godliness, *God manifested in the flesh;* and it is added, *seen of angels*[g].

The word made flesh, draws the eyes of those glorious spirits, and possesses them with wonder to see the Almighty Godhead joined with the weakness of a man, yea, of an infant. He that stretcheth forth the heavens, bound up in swadling cloaths! and to pass all the wonders of his life, this is beyond all admiration, that the Lord of life was subject to death, and that his love to rebellious mankind, moved him both to take on, and lay down that life.

It is no wonder the angels admire those things, and delight to look upon them; but it is strange that we do not so. They view them stedfastly, and we neglect them, either we consider them not at all, or give them but a transient look, half an eye. That which was the great business of the prophets and apostles both for their own times, and to convey them to us, we regard not; and turn our eyes to foolish wandering thoughts, which angels are ashamed at. They are not so concerned in this great mystery as we are; they are but mere beholders in comparison of us, yea, they seem rather to be losers some way, that our nature, in itself inferior to theirs, is in Jesus Christ exalted above theirs[h]. We bow down to the

[g] 1 Tim. iii. 16. [h] Heb. ii. 16.

earth, and study, and grovel in it, rake into the very bowels of it, and content ourselves with the outside of *the unsearchable riches of Christ*, and look not within it; but they having no will nor desire, but for the glory of God, being pure flames of fire, burning only in love to him, are no less delighted than amazed with the bottomless wonders of his wisdom and goodness shining in the work of our redemption.

It is our shame and our folly that we lose ourselves and our thoughts in poor childish things, and trifle away our days we know not how, and let these rich mysteries lie unregarded. They look upon the deity in itself with continual admiration; but then they look down to this mystery as another wonder. We give them an ear in public, and in a cold formal way stop conscience's mouth, with some religious performances in private and no more: but to have deep and frequent thoughts, and to be ravished in the meditation of our Lord Jesus, once on the cross, and now in glory, how few of us are acquainted with this?

We see here excellent company, and examples not only of the best of men that have been, but we have them fellow servants, and fellow-students, if that can persuade us, we may all study the same lesson with the very angels, and have the same thoughts with them. This the soul doth that often entertains itself with the delightful admiration of Jesus Christ, and the redemption he hath wrought for us.

Ver. 13. *Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

THE great error of man's mind, and the cause of all his errors of life, is the diverting of the soul from God, and turning downward to inferior confidences and comforts; and this mischoice is the very root of all our miseries: therefore the main end of the holy word of God, is to untie the hearts of men from the

world, and reduce them to God as their only rest and solid comfort; and this is here the apostle's mark at which all the preceding discourse aims; it all meets and terminates in this exhortation, *Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind.*

In the words are those *three* things, 1*st*, The great stay and comfort of the soul, which the apostle repeats, and represents to his afflicted brethren. 2*dly*, His exciting them to the right apprehension and confident expectation of it. 3*dly*, The inference of that exhortation.

I. The great matter of their comfort is, *the grace which is brought to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* Some for *grace* read *joy*, having, as it seems, for χάριν read χαράν; the words are not more near one to another, than the things they signify, *grace* and *joy*; but it is most commonly thus read.

The estate of grace, and that of glory, are not only so inseperably connected, but so like one to the other, yea so essentially the same, that the same expressions in scripture do often fit both of them, and so fit them, that it is doubtful for which of the two to understand them; but the hazard is not great, seeing they are so near, and so one, grace being glory begun, and glory grace compleated, both often called *the kingdom of God.* So *grace* here *brought to them* is the doctrine of grace in the gospel, wherein Jesus Christ is revealed, and that grace in him; for all the whole tenor of the covenant of grace, and every clause of it holds in him. His precious name runs through it all, it is the grace of salvation to be fully perfected at the last and clearest revelation of Jesus Christ; and for this rather I take it here, for that the apostle's nearest foregoing words were concerning that, and it is set up here as the object of hope, which though often put for faith, yet in its proper notion, looks out to that which is to come.

This is the last act of grace, and yet still it is called by itself, and not turned into the name of merit, notwithstanding all the obedience, and all the sufferings of the saints that have gone before it;

yea, *even the salvation to be revealed* to them is called grace. But it is needless to insist on this, for certainly none that partake of grace will be of another mind, or ever admit the mixture of the least notion of self-deserving.

Though much dispute hath been bestowed on this, and questions multiplying in the disputants hands, (as is usual in controversies) one growing out of another; yet truly I think the debate in this to be but waste; it is not only against the voice of the scriptures, and of grace itself in the soul, but even against sound reason, to imagine any meriting properly taken, in any mere creature at his Creator's hands who hath given him his being, of which gift all his services and obedience fall short; so that he can never come to be upon even disengaged terms, much less to oblige anew, and deserve somewhat further. Besides, that same grace, by which any serves and obeys God, is likewise his own gift, as it is said[i], *All things come of thee, and of thine own have I given thee.* Both the ability, and the will of giving to him, is from him; so that in these respects, not angels, nor man in innocency, could properly merit at the hands of God, much less man lost, redeemed again, and so coming under the new obligation of infinite mercy. And this is so evident a truth, that the most learned and most ingenuous jesuits and schoolmen have in divers passages of their writings acknowledged it, that there cannot be any compensation, and much less merit from the creature to God, but only in relation to his own free purpose, and the tenor of his word and covenant, which is inviolable, because he is unchangeable, and truth itself.

His first grace he gives freely, and no less freely the increases of it, and with the same gracious hand, sets the crown of glory upon all the grace that he hath given before. It is but the following forth of his own work, and fulfilling his own thoughts of free love, which love hath no cause, but in himself, and

[i] 1 Chron. xxix. 14

finds none worthy; but gives them all the worthiness they have, and accepts of their love, not as worthy in itself to be accepted, but because he himself hath wrought it in them; not only the first tastes, but the full draught of the waters of life is freely given[k], nothing is brought with them but *thirst*.

That is to be brought.] Not that is brought, or that shall be brought; but if we will render it strictly, it is, *that is a bringing to you.* That blessedness, that consummation of grace the saints are hastening forward to, walking on in their way wheresoever it lies indifferently, *through honour, and dishonour, through evil report and good report*[l]. And as they are hastening to it, it is hastening to them in the course of time, every day brings it nearer to them than before; and notwithstanding all difficulties and dangers in the way, they that have their eye and hopes upon it, shall arrive at it, and it shall be brought safe to their hand, all the malice of men and devils shall not be able to cut them short of this grace that is a bringing to them against the day of the *revelation of Jesus Christ.*

At the revelation of Jesus Christ.] This is repeated from the 7th verse, and it is *a day of revelation, a revelation of the just judgment of God*[m]. And thus it would be to all, were it not that it is withal the *revelation of Jesus Christ;* therefore is it a day of grace, all light, and blessedness to them that are in him, because they shall appear in him, and if he be glorious, they shall not be inglorious and ashamed. Indeed were our secret sins then to be set before our own eyes, in their most affrightful visage, and to be set open to the view of angels and men, and to the eye of divine justice, and we left alone so revealed, who is there that could gather any comfort, and would not rather have their thoughts filled with horror at the remembrance and expectation of that day? And thus indeed all unbelieving and ungodly men may look upon it, and find it terrible; but to those that are shadowed under the robe of righteous Jesus, yea,

[k] Rev. xxii. 17. [l] 2 Cor. vi. 8. [m] Rom. ii. 5.

that are made one with him, and shall partake of his glory in his appearing, it is the sweetest, the most comfortable thought that their souls can be entertained and possessed withal, to remember this glorious revelation of their Redeemer.

It is their great grief here, not that themselves are hated and vilified; but that their Lord Jesus is so little known, and therefore so much despised in the world; he is vailed and hid from the world; many nations acknowledge him not at all; and many of those that do in word confess, yet in deed deny him; many that have a form of godliness, do not only want, but mock and scoff at the power of it; and to such Christ is not known, his excellencies are hid from their eyes. Now this glory of their Lord being tender to them that love him, they rejoice much in the consideration of this, that there is a day at hand, wherein he shall appear in his brightness, and full of glory to all nations, and all shall be forced to acknowledge him; it shall be without doubt, and unquestioned to all, that here is *the Messiah, the Redeemer, the judge of the world.*

And as it is the day of his revelation, it is also the revelation of all the adopted sons of God in him[n]. They are now accounted the refuse of the world, exposed to all kind of contempts; but then the beams of Christ's glory shall beautify them, and they shall be known for his[o].

Next, there is, 2. The exhortation, by which the Apostle excites them to the right apprehension, and confident expectation of this grace, *hope to the end.* The difference of these two graces, *faith* and *hope*, is so small, that the one is often taken for the other in scripture; it is but a different aspect of the same confidence, *faith* apprehending the infallible truth of those divine promises, of which *hope* doth assuredly expect the accomplishment, and that is their truth; so that this immediately results from the other. This is the anchor fixed within the vail that keeps the soul firm against all the tossings on

[n] Rom. viii. 9. [o] 1 John iii. 2. Col. iii. 4.

these swelling seas, and the winds and tempests that arise upon them. The firmest thing in this inferior world is a believing soul.

Faith establishes the heart on Jesus Christ, and hope lifts it up, being on that rock, over the head of all intervenient dangers, crosses, and temptations, and sees the glory and happiness that follows after them.

To the end] Or perfectly; and therefore the christian seeks most earnestly, and yet waits most patiently[p]. Indeed this hope is perfect in continuance; it is a *hope unto the end*, because it is perfect in its nature, although imperfect in degree; sometimes doubtings are intermixed with it in the christian soul, yet *this is their infirmity*, as the psalmist speaks[q], not the infirmity and insufficiency of the object of their hope. Worldly hopes are in their own nature imperfect, they do imply in their very being doubtfulness and wavering, because the things whereon they are built, are inconstant and uncertain, and full of deceit and disappointments. How can that hope be immoveable, that is built upon moving sands or quagmire? That which is itself unfixed, cannot give stability to any other thing resting on it; but because the truth and goodness of the immutable God is the foundation of spiritual hope, therefore it is assured, and *like Mount Zion that cannot be removed*[r], and this is its perfection.

We proceed to consider, *3dly*, the consequence by which this exhortation is enforced. Now the Apostle exhorts his brethren to endeavour to have their hearts possessed with as high a measure and degree of this hope as may be, seeing in itself it is so perfect and firm, so assured an hope, that they aspire to all the assurance and perfection of it they can attain.

This hope, as I conceive, is not only to have the habit of it strong in the soul, but to act it often, to be often turning that way, to view that approaching day of liberty, *Lift up your heads, for the day of*

[p] Psal. cxxx. 6. [q] Psal. lxxvii. 10. [r] Psal. cxxv. 1.

your redemption draweth nigh[s]. Where this hope is often acted, it will grow strong, as all habits do; and where it is strong, it will work much, and delight to act often, and will controul both the doubtings, and the other many impertinent thoughts of the mind, and force them to yield the place to it. Certainly they that long much for that coming of Christ, will look often out to it; we are usually hoping after other things, that do but offer themselves to draw us after them, and to scorn us. What are the breasts of most of us, but so many nests of foolish hopes and fears intermixed, that entertain us day and night, and steal away our precious hours from us, that might be laid out so gainfully upon the wise and sweet thoughts of eternity, and upon the blessed and assured hope of the coming of our beloved Saviour?

The other words of exhortation here used are subservient to this end, that this hope may be the more perfect and firm; and a similar exhortation is much after the same manner joined by our Saviour[t], with the expectance and waiting for his coming; and in this posture the *Israelites* eating the passover, were expecting their deliverance, so we our full and final freedom.

If you would have much of this, call off your affections from other things that they may be capable of much of it. The same eye cannot both look up to Heaven, and down to earth at the same time; the more your affections are trussed up, and disentangled from the world, the more expedite and active will they be in this hope; the more sober they are, the less will they fill themselves with the coarse delights of earth, the more room will there be in them, and the more they shall be filled with this hope. It is great folly in our spiritual warfare, to charge ourselves superfluously. All fulness of one thing hinders the receiving and admittance of any other, especially of things so opposite, as these fulnesses are. *Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be*

[s] Luke xxi. 28. [t] Luke xii. 35.

ye filled with the Holy Ghost, saith the Apostle[u]; that is a brutish fulness, makes a man no man; this divine fulness makes him more than a man: It were happy to be so filled with this, as that it might be called a kind of drunkenness, as it was with the Apostles[x].

Be sober.] Or *watch*, the same word signifies both, and with good reason; for you know the unsober cannot watch. Now though one main part of sobriety, and that which more properly and particularly bears this name, *viz. temperance* in meat and drink, is here intended: and though against the opposite to this (not only the purity and spirituality of religion,) but even moral virtue inveighs as its special enemy; yea nature itself, and they that only naturally consider the body, and its interest of life and health, find reason enough to cry down this base intemperance, which is so hateful by its own deformity, and withal carries its punishment along with it. Although (I say) this sobriety is indeed most necessary for the preservation of grace and spiritual temper of the soul, and is here intended; yet I conceive it is not all that is here meant, the word is more general, for the moderate and sober use of all things worldly, as he says, *Gird up the loins of your mind*, so it is to be understood; let your minds be sober, all your affections inwardly attempered to your spiritual condition, not glutting yourselves with fleshly and perishing delights of any kind; for the more you take in of these, the less you shall have of spiritual comfort and of this perfect hope. They that pour out themselves upon present delights look not like strangers, and hopeful expectants of another life, and better pleasures.

And certainly the captain of our salvation will not own them for his followers, that lie down to drink of these waters, but only such as in passing take of them with their hand. As excessive eating or drinking makes the body sickly and lazy, fit for nothing but sleep; and besots the mind, as it cloys up with

[u] Eph. v. 18. [x] Act. ii.

filthy crudities the way through which the spirits should pass, bemiring them, and making them move heavily as a coach in a deep way: thus doth all immoderate use of the world, and its delights, wrong the soul in its spiritual condition, makes it sickly and feeble, full of spiritual distempers, and inactivity; benumbs the graces of the spirit, and fills the soul with sleepy vapours, makes it grow secure and heavy in spiritual exercises, and obstructs the way and motion of the Spirit of God in the soul; therefore, if you would be spiritual, healthful and vigorous, and enjoy much of the consolations of Heaven, be sparing, and sober in those of the earth, and what you abate of the one shall be certainly made up in the other. Health, and a good constitution of body, is a more constant remaining pleasure, than that of excess and momentary pleasing of the palate: thus the comfort of this hope is a more refined and more abiding contentment, than any that is to be found in the passing enjoyments of this world; and it is a foolish bargain, to exchange a drachm of the one for many pounds of the other. Consider how pressingly the Apostle St. *Paul* reasons[y]. And take withal our Saviour's exhortation, *Be sober and watch, for ye know not at what hour your Lord will come*[z].

The double minded man (says St. *James*) *is unstable in all his ways*[a], although the word signifies usually deceitfulness and dissimulation of mind, answering to the *Hebrew* phrase of *a heart and a heart:* yet here I conceive it hath another sense, agreeable to the Apostle's present discourse and scope; it is doubtfulness, and unsettled wavering of mind.

It is impossible that the course of life can be any other but uneven and incomposed, if the spring of it, *the heart*, whence *are the issues of life*[b], be so. A man that is not agreed within, not of one mind with himself, although there were nothing to trouble, nor alter him from without, that inward com-

[y] 1 Cor. ix. 25. [z] Matth. xxv. 13. [a] Jam. i. 8. [b] Prov. iv. 23.

motion is a sufficient principle and cause of inconstancy: how much more then must he waver, when he is assaulted, and beat upon by outward oppositions? he is like the waves of the sea, of himself ever fluctuating to and fro, according to the natural instability of that element; and at the same time exposed to the tossings of all the waves that arise.

It is therefore in religion a main thing to have the heart established, and fixed in the belief and hope of the great things we look for; this will beget strength of resolution, and constancy in action, and in suffering too. And this is here our Apostle's great intent to ballast the souls of his brethren with this firm belief, that they might sail even, and steady in those seas of trouble. Wherefore, (says he) if these things we have spoken be thus, if there is indeed truth in them, and you believe it so, what remains then, but to resolve for it upon any terms, to fit for the journey whatsoever be the difficulties, and in them all, to keep up the soul by that certain hope that will not disappoint us.

What he hath said before, is as it were showing them some fruits, some clusters of grapes of that promised land; and this exhortation is answerable to *Caleb's* word there[c], *Seeing it is so good a land, let us go up and possess it.* Though there be fleshly objects, *sons of Anak*, giants of temptations and afflictions, and sins to be overcome ere it be ours; yet it is well worth all our labour, and our God hath ascertained us of the victory, and given us, by his own word, undoubted hope of possessing it.

That which he principally exhorts unto in this verse, is the right placing and firm continuing of our hope. When we consider how much of our life is taken up this way, in hoping for things we have not, and that even they who have most of what others are desiring and pursuing, yet are still hoping for somewhat further, and when men have attained one thing, though it be something they promised them-

[c] Numb. xiii. 30.

selves to rest contented withal, yet presently upon obtaining it, hope begins to find out some new matter for itself. I say, considering the incessant working of this passion throughout our life, it is of very much concernment for us to give it a right object, and not still to be living in vanity and uncertainty. Here is then that for our hope to apply itself to, after which it needs not change, nor can change without the greatest loss. *Hope for the grace that is coming at the revelation of Jesus Christ;* bestow all your hope on this, and recal it not. *Hope perfectly, and to the end.*

The other part of the exhortation relates to this as the main end, and in the original runs in this form, *Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, being sober, hope:* and to the end hope may be the more perfect and endure to the end, and more like itself, *i. e.* heavenly, your minds must be freed from the earth, that they may set for Heaven; and this is expressed in two several words, but both meaning much the same thing: that temper of *sobriety*, and posture of being *girt*, are no other but the same removal of earthly mindedness, and incumbring cares and desires of earthly things.

Gird up the loins.] The custom of those countries was, that wearing long garments, they trussed them up for work or journey. Chastity is indeed a christian grace, and a great part of the soul's freedom and spiritualness, and fits it much for divine things, yet I think it is not so particularly and entirely intended in this expression, as St. *Jerom* and others take it; for though the girding of the loins seemed to them to favour that sense, it is only in allusion to the manner of girding up that was then used: and besides, the Apostle here makes it clear he meant somewhat else; for he says, *The loins of your minds.* Gather up your affections, that they hang not down to hinder you in your race, and so in your hopes of obtaining; and do not only gather them up, but tie them up, that they fall not down again, or if they do, be sure to gird them straiter

than before. Thus be still as men for your journey, tending to another place. This is not our home, nor the place of our rest, therefore our loins must be still girt up, our affections kept from training and dragging down upon the earth.

Men that are altogether earthly and profane, are so far from girding up the loins of their mind, that they set them wholly downwards. The very highest part of their soul is glued to the earth, and they are daily partakers of the serpent's curse, they go on their belly and eat the dust, *they mind earthly things*[d]. Now this disposition is inconsistent with grace; but they that are in some measure truly godly, though they grovel not so, yet may be somewhat guilty of suffering their affections to fall too low, that is, too much conversant with vanity, and further engaged than is meet, to some things that are worldly, and by this means abate of their heavenly hopes, and make them less perfect, less clear and sensible to their souls.

And because they are most subject to take this liberty in the fair and calm weather of prosperity, God doth often, and wisely and mercifully, cause rough blasts of affliction to arise upon them, to make them gather their loose garments nearer to them, and gird them closer.

Let us then remember our way, and where we are, and keep our garments girt up, for we walk amidst thorns and briers, that, if we let them down, will entangle and stop us, and possibly tear our garments. We walk through a world where there is much mire of sinful pollutions, and therefore cannot but defile them; and the crowd we are among will be ready to tread on them, yea our own feet may be intangled in them, and so make us stumble, and possibly fall. Our only safest way is to gird up our affections wholly.

This perfect hope is inforced by the whole strain of it: for well may we fix our hope on that happiness to which we are appointed in the eternal elec-

[d] Phil. iii. 19,

tion of God, v. 2. and born to it by our new birth, v. 3, 4. and preserved to it by his almighty power, v. 5. and cannot be cut short of it by all the afflictions and oppositions in the way, no nor so much as deprived by them of our present joy and comfort in the assurance of it, v. 6, 7, 8, 9. And then being taught the greatness and excellency of that blessed salvation, by the doctrine of the prophets and Apostles, and the admiration of angels, all these conspire to confirm our hope, to make it perfect and persevering to the end.

And we may also learn by the foregoing doctrine, that this is the place of our trial and conflict, but the place of our rest is above: we must here have *our loins girt*, but when we come there, we may wear our long white robes at their full length without disturbance, for there is nothing there but peace; and without danger of defilement, for *no unclean thing is there*, yea the streets of that new *Jerusalem* are paved with pure gold. To him then, that hath prepared that city for us, let us ever give praise.

Ver. 14. *As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts, in your ignorance.*

15. *But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.*

16. *Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.*

THY word is a lamp unto my feet, says *David, and a light unto my paths*[e], not only comfortable, as light is to the eyes, but withal directive, as a lamp to his feet. Thus here the Apostle doth not only furnish consolation against distress, but exhorts and directs his brethren in the way of holiness, without which, the apprehension and feeling of those comforts cannot subsist.

This is no other but a clearer and fuller expression, and further pressing of that sobriety and spiritualness of mind and life, that he jointly exhorted

[e] Psal. cxix. 105.

unto, with that of perfect hope, verse 13, as inseparably connected with it. If you would enjoy this hope, be not conformed to the lusts of your former ignorance, but be holy.

There is no doctrine in the world either so pleasant or so pure as that of christianity: it is matchless, both in sweetness and holiness. The faith and hope of a christian have in them an abiding precious balm of comfort; but this is never to be so lavished away, as to be poured into the puddle of an impure conscience: no, that were to lose it unworthily, *As many as have this hope purify themselves, even as he is pure*[f]. Here they are commanded to *be holy, as he is holy*[g]. Faith first purifies the heart, empties it of the love of sin, and then fills it with the consolation of Christ and the hope of glory.

It is a foolish misgrounded fear, and such as argues inexperience of the nature and workings of divine grace, to imagine that the assured hope of salvation will beget unholiness and presumptuous boldness in sin, and therefore that the doctrine of that assurance is a doctrine of licentiousness: our Apostle, we see, is not so sharp-sighted as these men think themselves; he apprehends no such matter, but indeed supposes the contrary as unquestionable: he takes not assured hope and holiness as enemies, but joins them as nearest friends, *hope perfectly*, and *be holy*.

They are mutually strengthened and increased each by the other. The more assurance of salvation, the more holiness, the more delight in it, and study of it, as the only way to that end. And as labour is then most pleasant, when we are made surest it shall not be lost, nothing doth make the soul so nimble and active in obedience as this *oil of gladness*, this assured hope of glory. Again, the more holiness is in the soul, the clearer always is this assurance, as we see the face of the Heavens best, when there are fewest clouds. The greatest affliction doth not

[f] 1 Joh. iii. 3. [g] Act. xv. 9.

damp this hope so much as the smallest sin, yea, it may be the more lively and sensible to the soul by affliction; but by sin it always suffers loss, as the experience of all christians does certainly teach them.

The Apostle exhorts to obedience, and enforceth it by a most persuasive reason. His exhortation is, 1. Negative, *Not fashioning yourselves.* 2. Positive, *Be ye holy.*

I. For the negative part of the exhortation. That which he would remove and separate them from is *lusts:* this is in scripture the usual name of all the irregular and sinful desires of the heart, both the polluted habits of them, and their corrupt streams, both as they are within, and outwardly vent themselves in the lives of men. The Apostle St. *John*[h] calls it the *Lust of the world,* and verse 15, *Love of the world;* and then verse 16, branches it into those three, that are indeed the base anti-trinity that the world worships, *The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.*

The soul of man unconverted is no other but a den of impure lusts, wherein dwells pride, uncleanness, avarice, malice, *&c.* just as *Babylon* is described[i]. Were a man's eyes opened, he would as much abhor to remain with himself in that condition, "as to dwell in a house full of snakes and "serpents," as St. *Austin* says. And the first part of conversion is once to rid the soul of these noisome inhabitants, for there is none at all found naturally vacant and free from them. Thus the Apostle here expresses of the believers he wrote, that these lusts were theirs before *in their ignorance.*

There is a truth in it, that all sin arises from some kind of ignorance, or, at least, from present inadvertence and inconsideration, turning away the mind from the light; which therefore, for the time, is as if it were not, and is all one with ignorance in the effect; and therefore the works of sin are all

[h] 1 Joh. ii. 17. [i] Rev. xviii. 2. or as Isa. xiii. 21.

called *works of darkness.* For were the true visage of sin seen at a full light, undressed and unpainted, it were impossible, while it so appeared, that any one soul could be in love with it, but would rather fly it, as hideous and abominable. But because the soul unrenewed is all darkness, therefore it is all lust, and love of sin; no order in it, because no light. As at the first in the world, confusion and darkness went together, and *darkness was upon the face of the deep*[k], it is so in the soul, the more ignorance, the more abundance of lusts.

That light that frees the soul, and rescues it from the very kingdom of darkness, must be somewhat beyond that which nature can attain to. All the light of philosophy natural and moral is not sufficient, yea, the very knowledge of the law, severed from Christ, serves not so to enlighten and renew the soul, as to free it from the darkness or ignorance here spoke of; for our Apostle writes to *Jews* that knew the law, and were instructed in it before their conversion, yet he calls those times wherein Christ was unknown to them, the *times of their ignorance.* Though the stars shine never so bright, and the moon with them in its full, yet they do not all together make it day, still it is night till the sun appear. Therefore the *Hebrew* doctors upon that word of *Solomon's, Vanity of vanities, all is vanity,* say, *Vana etiam lex, donec venerit Messias.* Therefore of him *Zacharias* says, *That the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace*[l].

A natural man may attain to very much acquired knowledge of the doctrine of Christ, and may discourse excellently of it, and yet still his soul be in the *chains of darkness,* fast locked up under the ignorance here mentioned, and so still of a *carnal mind,* in subjection to these lusts of ignorance.

[k] Gen. i. 2. [l] Luke i. 78, 79.

The saving light of faith is a beam of the *Sun of Righteousness* himself, that he sends into the soul, by which he makes it discern his incomparable beauties, and by that sight alienates it from all those lusts and desires that do then appear to be what indeed they are, vileness and filthiness itself, makes the soul wonder at itself, how it could love such base trash so long, and so fully resolves it now on the choice of Jesus Christ, *the chief among ten thousands*[m], yea, *the fairest of the children of men*[n], for that he is withal the only begotten Son of God, *the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person*[o].

The soul once acquainted with him, can with disdain turn off all the base solicitations and importunities of sin, and command them away that formerly had command over it, though they plead former familiarities, and the interest they once had in the heart of a christian before it was enlightened and renewed. He can well tell them after his sight of Christ, that it is true: while he knew no better than they were, he thought them lovely and pleasing, but that one glance of the face of Jesus Christ hath turned them all into extreme blackness and deformity; that so soon as ever Christ appeared to him, they straightway lost all their credit and esteem in his heart, and have lost it for ever, they need never look to recover it any more.

And it is from this that the Apostle enforceth this dehortation. It is true the lusts and vanities that are in request in the world were so with you, but it was when you were blind, they were the lusts of your ignorance; but now you know how ill they will suit with the light of that gospel which you profess, and that inward light of faith, which is in the souls of such as be really believers.

Therefore seeing you have renounced them, keep them still at that distance, never admit them more to lodge within you, that sure you cannot do; but do not so much as for custom sake, and compliance

[m] Cant. v. 10. [n] Psal. xlv. 2. [o] Heb. i. 3.

with the world about you, outwardly conform yourselves to any of them, or make semblance to partake of them, as St. *Paul* says, *Have no more fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*[p], reprove them by your carriage, and let the light of your holy lives discover their foulness.

II. We have the positive part of the Apostle's exhortation, *Be ye holy.* This includes the former, the renouncing of the lusts and pollutions of the world, both in heart and life; and adds farther, filling of their room, being cast out, with the beautifying graces of the Spirit of God, and the acting of those in their whole conversation in private and abroad, in conversing with themselves, and conversing with others, whether good or bad, in a constant even course, still like themselves, and like him who hath called them: for it is a most unseemly and unpleasant thing to see a man's life full of ups and downs, one step like a christian, and another like a worldling, it cannot chuse but both pain himself and mar the edification of others.

But as he which hath called you is holy.] Consider whose you are, and you cannot deny that it becomes you to be holy. Consider your near relation to the holy God, this is expressed two ways, namely, *as children, and as he which hath called you;* which is all one as if he had said, hath begotten you again. The very outward vocation of those that profess Christ, presseth holiness upon them, but the inward far more. You were running to destruction in the way of sin, and there was a voice, together with the gospel preached to your ear, that spake into your heart, and called you back from that path of death to the way of holiness, which is the only way of life. He hath severed you from the mass of the profane world, and picked you out to be jewels for himself; he hath set you apart for this end, that you may be holy to him, as the *Hebrew* word that signifies *holiness,*

[p] Eph. v. 11.

imports *setting apart*, or fitting for a peculiar use; be not then untrue to his design, *He hath not called you to uncleanness, but unto holiness*[q]. Therefore *be ye holy*. It is sacrilege for you to dispose of yourselves after the impure manner of the world, and to apply yourselves to any profane use, whom God hath consecrated to himself.

As children.] This is no doubt relative to that which he spoke, verse 3, by way of thanksgiving; and that *wherefore* of the 13th verse draws it down hither by way of exhortation. Seeing you are by a spiritual and new birth the children of so great and good a Father, he commands you holiness; be obedient children, in being holy; and seeing he himself is most holy, be like him as his children, *Be ye holy as he is holy*.

As obedient children.] Opposite to that[r], *Sons of disobedience*, or *unbelief*, as the word may be rendered, and that is always the spring of disobedience. Sons of mispersuasibleness, that will not be drawn and persuaded by the tenderest mercies of God. Now, though this *Hebrew* manner of speech, *Sons of obedience* or *disobedience*, signify no more but obedient or disobedient persons, yet it doth signify them most emphatically, and means a high degree of obedience or disobedience; these *sons of disobedience*, verse 2, are likewise *sons of wrath*, verse 3.

Of all children, the children of God are most obliged to obedience, for he is both the wisest and the most loving of Fathers. And the sum of all his commands is that which is their glory and happiness, that they endeavour to be like him, to resemble their heavenly Father, *Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect*, says our Saviour[s]. And here the Apostle citing out of the law, *Be ye holy, for I am holy*[t]. Law and gospel agree in this. And as children that resemble their fathers, as they grow up in years they grow the liker to them; thus the children of God do increase in their resem-

[q] 1 Thes. iv. 7. [r] Eph. ii. 2. [s] Matth. v. 48. [t] Levit. xi. 44.

blance, and are daily more and more renewed after his image. There is in them an innate likeness by his image impressed on them in their first renovation, and his Spirit dwelling within them; and there is a continuing increase of it, by their pious imitation and study of conformity, which is here exhorted to.

The imitation of vicious men and the corrupt world is here forbid; the imitation of men's indifferent customs is base and servile; the imitation of the virtues of good men is commendable: but the imitation of this highest pattern, this primitive goodness, the most holy God, is the top of excellency. And it is well said, *Summa religionis est imitari quem colis.* All of us offer him some kind of worship, but few seriously study and endeavour this blessed conformity.

There is (no question) among those that profess themselves the people of God, a select number, that are indeed his children, and bear his image both in their hearts and in their lives; this impression of holiness is on themselves and their conversation: but with the most, a name and a form of godliness is all they have for religion. Alas! we speak of holiness, and we hear of it, and it may be we commend it, but we act it not; or if we do, it is but acting of it, in that sense the word is taken, for a personated acting, as on a stage in the sight of men, not as in the sight of our lovely God, lodging it in our hearts, and from thence diffusing it into all our actions. A child is then truly like his father, when not only his visage resembles him, but more his mind and inward disposition: thus are the true children of God like their heavenly Father in their words and in their actions, but most of all in heart.

It is no matter though the profane world (that so hate God that it cannot endure his image) do mock and revile: it is thy honour, as *David* said[n], to be thus more vile, in growing still more like unto him

[n] 2 Sam. vi. 22.

in holiness; and though the civil man count thy fashion a little odd and too precise, it is because he knows nothing above that model of goodness he hath set himself, and therefore approves of nothing beyond it: he knows not God, and therefore doth not discern and esteem what is likest him. When courtiers come down into the country, the common home-bred people possibly think their habit strange, but they care not for that, it is the fashion at court. What need then the godly be so tender fore-headed, as to be out of countenance because the world looks on holiness as a singularity, it is the only fashion in the highest court, yea, of the King of Kings himself.

For I am holy.] As it will raise our endeavour high, to look on the highest pattern, so it will lay our thoughts low concerning ourselves. Men compare themselves with men, and readily with the worst, and flatter themselves with that comparative betterness: this is not the way to see our spots, to look into the muddy streams of profane mens lives; but look into the clear fountain of the word, and there we may both discern and wash them; and consider the infinite holiness of God, and this will humble us to the dust. When *Isaiah* saw the glory of the Lord, and heard the Seraphims cry, *Holy, holy, holy,* he cried out of his own and the people's unholiness, *Woe is me, for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts*[x].

Ver. 17. *And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.*

THE temptations that meet a christian in the world to turn him aside from the straight way of obedience and holiness, are either such as present the hope of some apparent good, to draw him from that way; or the fear of some evil, to drive and affright

[x] Chap. vi. 3, 4.

him from it: and therefore the word of God is much in strengthening the christian mind against these two, and it doth it especially, by possessing it both with hopes and fears of a higher nature, that do by far weigh down the other.

The most frequent assaults of temptation are upon these two passions of the mind, therefore they are chiefly to be fortified and defended, by a hope and fear opposite to those that do assault us, and sufficiently strong to resist and repel them.

These two therefore our apostle here urges, 1. The *hope* of that glory that the gospel propounds, and so outbids all the proffers of the world, both in the greatness and the certainty of its promises. 2. The *fear* of God, the greatest and justest judge, only worthy to be feared and reverenced; the highest anger and enmity of all the world being less than nothing, in comparison of his smallest displeasure. We have here,

1. This fear. 2. The reason enforcing it. 3. The term or continuance of it.

I. The fear itself, *In fear.* But how suits this with the high discourse that went before, of perfect assured hope, of faith, and love, and joy, yea, joy unspeakable and glorious, arising out of these? how are all those excellencies fallen as it were into a dungeon, when fear is mentioned after them? Doth not the apostle St. *John* say, *that true love casteth out fear*[a]? And is it not more clearly opposite to perfect or assured hope, and to faith and joy?

If ye understand it aright, this is such a fear as doth not prejudice, but preserve those other graces, and the comfort and joy that arises from them: and they all agree so well with it, that they are naturally helps to each other.

It were superfluous to insist on the defining this passion of fear, and the manifold distinctions of it, either with philosophers or divines. The fear here recommended is, out of question, a holy self-suspicion and fear of offending God, which may not

[a] 1 John iv. 18.

only consist with assured hope of salvation, and with faith, and love, and spiritual joy, but is their inseparable companion, as all divine graces are linked together, (as the heathens said of their three graces) and as they dwell together they grow or decrease together. The more a christian believes, and loves, and rejoices in the love of God, the more unwilling surely he is to displease him, and if in danger, the more afraid of it, and on the other side, this fear being the true principle of a wary and holy conversation, flying sin and the occasions of sin, and temptations to it, and resisting them when they make an assault, is as a watch or guard that keeps out the enemies and disturbers of the soul, and so preserves its inward peace, keeps the assurance of faith and hope unmolested, and that joy which they cause, and the intercourse and societies of love betwixt the soul and her beloved uninterrupted; all which are then most in danger when this fear abates and falls to slumbering, for then some notable sin or other is ready to break in and put all into disorder, and for a time makes those graces and the comfort of them, to present feeling, as much to seek as if they were not there at all.

No wonder then if the apostle having stirred up his christian brethren, whatsoever be their estate in the world, to seek to be rich in those jewels of faith, and hope, and love, and spiritual joy, and then considering that they travel amongst a world of thieves and robbers, (no wonder I say) that he adds this, advises them to give those their jewels in custody, under God, to this trusty and watchful grace of godly fear; and having earnestly exhorted them to holiness, he is very fitly particular in this fear, which makes up so great a part of that holiness, that it is often in scripture named for it all.

Solomon calls it the *beginning* or the *top of wisdom*[b], the word signifies both, and it is both. The beginning of it is the beginning of wisdom, and the progress and increase of it, is the increase

[b] Prov. xv. 33.

of wisdom. That hardy rashness that many account valour is the companion of ignorance; and of all rashness, boldness to sin is the most witless and foolish. There is in this, as in all fear, an apprehension of an evil, whereof we are in danger. The evil is sin, and the displeasure of God, and punishment following upon sin. The godly man judgeth wisely, as the truth is, that sin is the greatest of evils, and the cause of all other evils; it is a transgression of the just law of God, and so a provocation of his just anger, and the cause of those punishments, temporal, spiritual and eternal, which he inflicts. And then considering how mighty he is to punish, both the power and reach of his hand, that it is both most heavy and unavoidable; all these things may and should concur to the working of this fear.

There is (no doubt) a great difference betwixt those two kinds of fear that are usually differenced by the name of *servile* and *filial* fear, but certainly the most genuine fear of the sons of God, that call him Father, doth not exclude the consideration of his justice, and of the punishment of sin that his justice inflicts; we see here it is used as the great motive of this fear, that he *judgeth every man according to his works.* And *David* in that Psalm, wherein he so much breathes forth those other sweet affections of love and hope, and delight in God, and in his word, yet expresseth this fear even of the justice of God, *my flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments*[c]. The flesh is to be awed with divine judgments, though the higher and surer part of the soul is strongly and freely tied with the cords of love. Temporal corrections indeed they fear not so much in themselves, as that impression of wrath that may be upon them for their sins[d]. That is the main matter of their fear, because their happiness is in his love, and the light of his countenance, that is their life; they regard not, how the world looks upon them, they care not

[c] Psm. cxix. 120. [d] Psm. vi. 1. &c.

who frown, so he smile on them; and because no other enemy, nor evil in the world can deprive them of this but their own sin; therefore it is that, they fear most.

As the evil is great, so the christian hath great reason to fear in regard of his danger of it, considering the multitude, strength and craft of his enemies, and his own weakness and unskilfulness to resist them. And his sad experience in being often foiled, teacheth him that it is thus; he cannot be ignorant of it; he finds how often his own resolutions and purposes deceive him. Certainly a godly man is sometimes driven to wonder at his own frailty and inconstancy. What strange differences will be betwixt him and himself; how high and how delightful at some times are his thoughts of God, and the glory of the life to come; and yet how easily at another time, base temptations will bemire him, or at the least molest and vex him; and this keeps him in a continual fear, and that fear in continual vigilancy and circumspectness. When he looks up to God, and considers the truth of his promises, and the sufficiency of his grace and protection, and the almighty strength of his Redeemer, these things fill his soul with confidence and assurance: but when he turns his eye downward again upon himself, and finds so much remaining corruption within, and so many temptations and dangers, and adversaries without, this forces him not only to fear, but to despair of himself; and it should do so, that his trust in God may be the purer and more entire: that confidence in God will not make him secure and presumptuous in himself, nor that fear of himself make him diffident of God. This fear is not opposite to faith, but high-mindedness and presumption is [e]. To a natural man it would seem an odd kind of reasoning that of the apostle[f], *It is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure.* Therefore, would he think, you may save labour, you may sit still, and not work; or if you work, you may work fearlessly,

[e] Rom. xi. 20. [f] Phil. ii. 12, 13.

being so sure of his help: but the apostle is of another mind; his inference is, therefore, *work out your own salvation*, and work it *with fear and trembling*.

But why should he, that hath assurance of salvation, fear? If there is truth in his assurance, nothing can disappoint him, not sin itself, it is true; but it is no less true, that if he do not fear to sin, there is no truth in his assurance; it is not the assurance of faith, but the mispersuasion of a secure and profane mind.

2. Suppose it so, that the sins of a godly man cannot be such as to cut him short of that salvation whereof he is assured; yet they may be such as for a time will deprive him of that assurance, and not only remove the comfort he hath in that, but let in horrors and anguish of conscience in its stead. Though a believer is freed from hell (and we may overstrain this assurance in our doctrine, beyond what the soberest and devoutest men in the world can ever find in themselves, though they will not trouble themselves to contest and dispute with them that say they have it) so that his soul cannot come there; yet some sins may bring as it were a piece of hell into his soul for a time, and this is reason enough for any christian in his right wits to be afraid of sin. No man would willingly hazard himself upon a fall that may break his leg, or some other bone, though he could be made sure, that he should not break his neck, or that his life were not at all in danger, and that he should be perfectly cured; yet the pain and trouble of such a hurt would terrify him, and make him wary and fearful when he walks in danger. The broken bones that *David* complains of after his fall, may work fear and wariness in these that hear him, though they were ascertained of a like recovery.

This fear is not cowardice, it doth not debase, but elevates the mind; for it drowns all lower fears, and begets true fortitude, and courage to encounter all dangers, for a good conscience, and the obeying

of God. *The righteous is bold as a lion*[g], he dares do any thing but offend God, and to dare do that is the greatest folly, and baseness, and weakness in the world From this fear have sprung all the generous resolutions, and patient sufferings of the saints, and martyrs of God, because they durst not sin against him; therefore they durst be imprisoned, and impoverished, and tortured, and die for him. Thus the prophet sets carnal and godly fear as opposite, and the one expelling the other[h]. And our Saviour[i], *Fear not them that kill the body: but fear him which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. Yea, I say unto you, fear him.* Fear not, but fear; and therefore fear, that you may not fear. This fear is like the trembling that hath been observed in some of great courage before battles. *Moses* was bold, and fearless in dealing with a proud and wicked king, but when God appeared he said, (as the apostle informs us) *I exceedingly fear and quake*[k].

II. The reason we have here to persuade this fear, is twofold. (1.) Their relation to God. (2.) Their relation to the world.

First, to God as their Father, as their judge. Because you do call him father, and profess yourselves his children, begotten again by him (for this looks back to that) it becomes you, as obedient children, to stand in awe, and fear to offend him your Father, and a Father so full of goodness and tender love; but as he is the best Father, so consider that he is withal the greatest, and justest judge, *He judges every man according to his work.*

God always sees and discerns men, and all their work, and *judgeth*, that is, accounteth of them as they are, and sometimes in this life declares this his judgment of them to their own consciences, and in some to the view of others, in visible punishments and rewards: but the most solemn judgment of all, is reserved to that great day which he hath appoint-

[g] Prov. xxviii. 1. [h] Isa. viii. 12, 13. [i] Luke xii. 4.
[k] Heb. xii. 21.

ed, *wherein he will judge the world in righteousness by his Son Jesus*[l].

There is here the sovereignty of this judge, the universality of his judgment, and the equity of it. All must answer at his great court, he is supreme judge of the world; he made it, and hath therefore unquestionable right to judge it, *he judgeth every man;* and it is a most righteous judgment, which hath these two in it: 1. An exact and perfect knowledge of all men's works; 2. Impartial judgment of them so known. This second is expressed negatively, by removing the crooked rule which man's judgment often follows; it is without consideration of those personal differences that men eye so much: and the first is according to the work itself[m], *He accepteth not the person of princes nor regardeeh the rich more than the poor;* and the reason is added there, *for they are all the work of his hands.* He made all the persons, and he makes all those differences himself, as it pleaseth him; therefore he doth not admire them as we do, no, nor at all regard them: we find very great odds betwixt stately palaces and poor cottages, betwixt a prince's robes, and a beggar's cloak; but to God, they are all one, all these petty differences vanish in comparison of his own greatness; men are great and small compared one with another; but they all together amount to just nothing in respect of him: we find high mountains and low vallies on this earth, but compared with the vast compass of the heavens, it is all but as a point, and hath no sensible greatness at all.

Nor regards he any other differences to bias his judgment, from the works of men, to their persons. You profess the true religion, and call him Father; but if you live devoid of his fear, and be disobedient children, he will not spare you because of that relation, but rather punish you the more severely, because you pretended to be his children, and yet obeyed him not; therefore you shall find him your judge, and an impartial judge of your works. Re-

[l] Acts. xvii. 32.. [m] Job. xxxiv. 19.

member therefore that your Father is this judge, and fear to offend him. But then indeed a believer may look back to the other for comfort, that abuses it not to a sinful security. He resolves thus willingly, I will not sin, because my Father is this just judge; but for my frailties I will hope for mercy, because the judge is my Father.

Their works: comprehend all actions and words, yea, thoughts, and each work entirely taken outside and inside together; for he sees all alike, and judgeth according to all together; he looks on the wheels and paces within, as well as on the handle without, and therefore ought we to fear the least crookedness of our intentions in the best works; for if we entertain any such, and study not singleness of heart, this will cast all, though we pray and hear the word, and preach it, and live outwardly unblameably. And in that great judgment, all secret things shall be manifest; as they are always open to the eye of this judge, so he shall then open them before men and angels: therefore let the remembrance and frequent consideration of this all-seeing judge, and of that great judgment, waken our hearts, and beget in us this fear[n]. If you would have confidence in that day, and not fear it when it comes, fear it now, so as to avoid sin; for they that now tremble at it, shall then, when it comes, lift up their faces with joy: and they that will not fear it now, shall then be overwhelmed with fears and terror; they shall have such a burden of fear then, as that they shall account the hills and mountains lighter than it.

The reason of this fear, so far as it refers to their relation to the world, may be united with the next head: as

III. We have the term or continuance of the *fear* recommended, *Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.*] In this I conceive is implied another persuasive of this fear. You are *sojourners* and *strangers*, as here the word signifies; and a wary

[n] 2 Cor. v. 10, 11.

circumspect carriage becomes strangers, because they are most exposed to wrongs and hard accidents. You are encompassed with enemies and snares, how can you be secure in the midst of them? This is not your rest, watchful fear becomes this your sojourning. Perfect peace and security is reserved for you at home, and that is the last term of this fear; it continues all the time of this sojourning life, dies not before us, we and it shall expire together.

Blessed is he that feareth always, says *Solomon*[o]. In secret, and in society, in his own house, and in God's, we must hear the word with fear, and preach it with fear, afraid to miscarry in our intentions and manners. *Serve the Lord with fear*, yea, in times of inward comfort and joy, yet *rejoice with trembling*[p]. Not only when a man feels most his own weakness, but when he finds himself strongest. None are so high advanced in grace here below, as to be out of need of this grace; but when their sojourning shall be done, and they are come home to their father's house above, then no more fearing. No entry for dangers there, and therefore no fear. A holy reverence of the Majesty of God, they shall indeed have then most of all, as the angels still have, because they shall see him most clearly, and the more he is known, the more reverenced: but this fear that relates to danger shall then vanish; for in that world there is neither sin nor sorrow for sin; nor temptation to sin; no more conflicts, but after a full and final victory, an eternal peace, an everlasting triumph. Not only fear, but faith and hope, do imply some imperfection not consistent with that blessed estate: and therefore all of them having obtained their end, shall end; *faith* in *sight*, and *hope* in *possession*, and *fear* in *perfect safety;* and everlasting love and delight shall fill the whole soul in the vision of God.

[o] Prov. xxviii. 14. [p] Psal. ii. 11.

Ver. 18. *For as much as ye know, that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers.*

19. *But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*

It is impossible for a christian to give himself to conform with the world's ungodliness, unless first, he forgets who he is, and by what means he attained to be what he is. Therefore the Apostle, persuading his brethren to holiness, puts them in mind of this, as the strongest incentive; not only have you the example of God set before you as your father, to beget in you the love of holiness, being your liveliest resemblance of him; and the justice of God as your judge, to argue you into a pious fear of offending him: but consider this, that he is your Redeemer, he hath bought out your liberty from sin and the world, to be altogether his; and think on the price laid down in this ransom; and these out of question will prevail with you.

We have here the evil dissuaded from, *viz. A vain conversation.* 2. The dissuasion itself; 1. it is called *their vain conversation.* 2. *Received by tradition from their fathers.* By this I conceive is not only understood the superstitions and vain devices in religion, that abounded amongst the Jews by tradition, of which our Saviour often reproved them while he was conversant among them, as we find in the gospel; and all this was meant, *v.* 14, by *the lusts of their former ignorance;* but generally all the corrupt and sinful customs of their lives: for it seems not so pertinent to his purpose when exhorting to holiness of life, to speak of their superstitious traditions, as their other sinful habitudes, which are no less hereditary, and, by the power of example, traditional; which, by reason of their common root in man's sinful nature, do so easily pass from parents to children, nature making their example powerful, and the corruption of nature giv-

ing it most power in that which is evil. And this is the rather mentioned to take away the force of it, and cut off that influence which it might have had in their minds. There is a kind of conversation that the authority of your fathers pleads for; but remember, that it is that very thing from which you are delivered, and called to a new state and form of life, and have a new pattern set before you, instead of that corrupt example.

It is one great error, not only in religion and manners, but even in human science, that men are ready to take things upon trust unexamined, from these that went before them, partly out of easiness, and sparing the pains of trial, partly out of a superstitious over-esteem of their authority: but the chief reason why corruptions in religion, and in the practice of preceding ages, take so much with posterity, is that before mentioned, the universal sympathy and agreement that those evils have with the corrupt nature of man.

The prophet *Ezekiel* observes this particularly in the *Jews*[q], *That their eyes were after their fathers idols*, contrary to God's express forewarning[r]. This was the great quarrel of the Heathens against the christian religion in the primitive times, that it was new, and unknown to their fathers, and the ancient writers of those times are frequent in shewing the vanity of this exception, particularly *Lactantius, Instit. lib.* 2. *cap.* 7, 8. The same prejudice doth the church of *Rome* sing over continually against the reformed religion. Where was it before *Luther?* &c. But this is a foolish and unreasonable diversion from the search of truth, because error is more at hand; or from the entertaining it, being found, because falshood is in possession.

As in religion, so in the course and practice of mens lives, the stream of sin runs from one age into another, and every age makes it greater, adding somewhat to what it receives, as rivers grow in their course, by the accession of brooks that fall into

[q] Chap. xx. ver. 24. [r] v. 18.

them, and every man when he is born, falls like a drop into this main current of corruption, and so is carried down with it, and this by reason of its strength, and his own nature, which willingly dissolves into it, and runs along with it. In this is manifest the power of divine grace in a man's conversion, that it severs him so powerfully from the profane world, and gives him strength to run contrary to the great current of wickedness that is round about him, in his parents possibly, and in his kindred and friends, and in the most of men that he meets withal. The voice of God, that powerful word of effectual calling that he speaks in to the heart, makes a man break through all, and leave all to follow God, as *Abraham* did, being called out from his kindred and father's house, to journey towards the land that God had promised him. And this is that which is spoke to the church, and to each believing soul by the Spirit of God, *Forget also thine own people and thy father's house, so shall the king greatly delight in thy beauty*[s]. Regard not what others think, though thy nearest friends, but study only to please him, and then thou shalt please him indeed. Do not deform thy face with looking out asquint to the custom of the world, but look straight forward on him, and so thou shalt be beautiful in his eyes. When God calls a man in a remarkable manner, his profane friends are all in a tumult; what needs this, to be more precise than we, and all your neighbours? But all this is a confused noise, that works nothing on the heart that the Lord hath touched; it must follow him, though by trampling upon friends and kindred, if they lie in the way. We see how powerfully a word from Christ drew his disciples to leave all and follow him.

The *exhortation* is against all sinful and unholy conversation, by what authority and example soever recommended to us. The Apostle's reasons in those words are strong and pressing; there is one ex-

[s] Psal. xlv. 10, 11.

pressed in the very name he gives it, *it is vain conversation.*

The mind of man, the guide and source of his actions, while it is estranged from God, is nothing but a forge of vanities, the Apostle St. *Paul* speaks this of the *Gentiles, that they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkned*[t], their great naturalists and philosophers not excepted; and the more they strove to play the wise men, the more they befooled themselves; thus likewise[u]. And thus the Lord complains by his prophet of the extreme folly of his people[x], and by *Jeremy*, that *their hearts are lodges of vain thoughts*[y], and these are the true cause of a *vain conversation.*

The whole course of a man's life out of Christ is nothing but a continual trading in vanity, running a circle of toil and labour, and reaping no profit at all. This is the vanity of every natural man's conversation, that not only others are not benefited by it, but it is fruitless to himself; there arises to him no solid good out of it. That is most truly vain, that attains not its proper end: now all a man's endeavours aiming at his satisfaction and contentment, that conversation that gives him nothing of that, but removes him further from it, is justly called *vain conversation. What fruit had ye*, says the Apostle, *in those things whereof ye are now ashamed*[z]? Either count that shame that (at the best) grows out of them, *their fruit*, or confess they have none; therefore they are called *the unfruitful works of darkness*[a].

Let the voluptuous person say it out upon his death-bed, what pleasure or profit doth then abide with him of all his former sinful delights. Let him tell if there remain any thing of them all, but that which he would gladly not have to remain, the sting of an accusing conscience, which is as lasting as the delight of sin was short and vanishing. Let the covetous and ambitious declare freely, even those

[t] Rom. i. 21. [u] Eph. iv. 17. [x] Isa. xliv. 20. [y] Jer. iv. 14.
[z] Rom. vi. 21. [a] Ephes. v. 11.

of them that have prospered most in their pursuit of riches and honour, what ease all their possessions or titles do then help them to, whether their pains are the less, because their chests are full, or their houses stately, or a multitude of friends and servants waiting on them with hat and knee; and if all these things cannot ease the body, how much less can they quiet the mind? And therefore is it not true, that all pains in these things, and the uneven ways into which they sometimes stept aside to serve those ends, and generally that all the ways of sin, wherein they have wearied themselves, were vain rollings, and tossings up and down, not tending to a certain haven of peace and happiness? It is a lamentable thing to be deluded a whole lifetime with a false dream [b].

You that are going on in the common road of sin, although many, and possibly your own parents, have trod it before you, and the greatest part of these you now know are in it with you, and keep you company in it; yet be persuaded to stop a little, and ask yourselves, what is it you seek, or expect in the end of it? Would it not grieve any labouring man to work hard all the day, and have no wages to look for at night? It is a greater loss to wear out our whole life, and in the evening of our days find nothing but anguish and vexation. Let us then think this, that so much of our life as is spent in the ways of sin, is all lost fruitless and *vain conversation.*

And in so far as the Apostle says here, *You are redeemed from this conversation,* this imports it to be a servile slavish condition, as the other word (vain) expresses it, to be fruitless. And this is the madness of a sinner, that he fancies liberty in that which is the basest thraldom, as those poor frantick persons that are lying ragged, and bound in chains, yet imagine that they are kings, that their irons are chains of gold, their rags robes, and their filthy lodge a palace. As it is misery to be liable to the

[b] Isa. ii. 8.

sentence of death, so it is slavery to be subject to the dominion of sin; and he that is delivered from the one is likewise set free from the other. There is one redemption from both. He that is redeemed from destruction by the blood of Christ, is likewise redeemed from that vain and unholy conversation that leads to it. So[c] our Redeemer was anointed for this purpose, not to free the captives from the sentence of death, and yet leave them still in prison, but to *proclaim liberty to them, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound*[d].

You easily persuade yourselves that Christ hath died for you, and redeemed you from hell; but you consider not, that if it be so, he hath likewise redeemed you from your vain conversation, and hath set you free from the service of sin. Certainly while you find not that, you can have no assurance of the other, if the chains of sin continue still upon you, for any thing you can know, these chains do bind you over to the other *chains of darkness* the Apostle speaks of[e]. Let us not delude ourselves, if we find the love of sin and of the world work stronger in our hearts than the love of Christ, we are not as yet partakers of his redemption.

But if we have indeed laid hold upon him, as our Redeemer, then are we redeemed from the service of sin, not only from the grossest profaneness, but even from all kind of fruitless and *vain conversation*: And therefore ought to *stand fast in that liberty, and not to entangle ourselves again to any of our former vanities*[f].

Not redeemed with corruptible things.] From the high price of our redemption the Apostle doth mainly enforce our esteem of it, and urge the preservation of that liberty so dearly bought, and the avoiding all that unholiness, and vain conversation, from which we are freed by that redemption. 1. He expresseth it negatively, *not with corruptible things*, (Oh! foolish we, that hunt them, as if they were incorruptible and everlasting treasures) no, not the

[c] Tit. ii. 14. [d] Isa. lxi. 1. [e] 2 Pet. ii. 4. [f] Galat. v. 1.

best of them, these that are in highest account with men, *not with silver and gold*, these are not of any value at all towards the ransom of souls; they cannot buy off the death of the body, nor purchase the continuance of temporal life, much less can they reach to the worth of spiritual and eternal life. The precious soul could not be redeemed but by blood, and by no blood but that of this spotless Lamb Jesus Christ, who is God equal with the father: and therefore his blood is called, *The blood of God*[g]. So that the Apostle may well call it here *precious*, exceeding the whole world, and all things in it in value. Therefore frustrate not the sufferings of Christ, if he shed his blood to redeem you from sin, be not false to his end.

As of a Lamb without blemish.] He is that great and everlasting sacrifice that gave value and virtue to all the sacrifices under the law: their blood was of no worth to the purging away of sin, but by relation to his blood; and the laws concerning the choice of the paschal Lamb, or other Lambs for sacrifice, were but obscure and imperfect shadows of his purity and perfections, who is the undefiled *Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world*[h]. A lamb in meekness and silence, *he opened not his mouth*[i]. And in purity here, *without spot or blemish. My well-beloved*, says the spouse, *is white and ruddy*[k], white in spotless innocency, and red in suffering a bloody death.

For as much as ye know.] It is that must make all this effectual, the right knowledge, and due consideration of it: ye do know it already, but I would have you know it better, more deeply and practically, turn it often over, be more in the study and meditation of it; there is work enough in it still for the most discerning mind; it is a mystery so deep, that you shall never reach the bottom of it, and withal so useful, that you shall find always new profit by it: our folly is, we gape after new things, and yet are in effect ignorant of the things we think we

[g] Act. xx. [h] John i. 29. [i] Isa. liii. 7. [k] Cant. v. 10.

know best. That learned Apostle that knew so much, and spoke so many tongues, yet *I determined*, says he, *to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified*[l]. And again he expresses this as the top of his ambition, *that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death*[m]. That conformity is this only knowledge: he that hath his lusts unmortified, and a heart unweaned from the world, though he know all the history of the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ, and can discourse well of them, yet indeed he knows them not.

If you would increase much in holiness, and be strong against the temptations to sin, this is the only art of it; view much, and so seek to know much of the death of Jesus Christ. Consider often at how high a rate we were redeemed from sin, and provide this answer for all the enticements of sin and the world. Except you can offer my soul something beyond that price that was given for it on the cross, I cannot hearken to you. "Far be it from me, "(will a christian say that considers this redemp-"tion) that ever I should prefer a base lust, or any "thing in this world, or it all, to him that gave "himself to death for me, and paid my ransom "with his blood: his matchless love hath freed "me from the miserable captivity of sin, and hath "for ever fastened me to the sweet yoke of his "obedience. Let him alone to dwell and rule with-"in me, and let him never go forth from my heart, "who for my sake refused to come down from the "cross."

Ver. 20. *Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world; but was manifest in these last times for you.*

Of all those considerations (and there are many) that may move men to obedience, there is none

[l] 1 Cor. ii. 2. [m] Philip. iii. 10.

that persuades both more sweetly and strongly than the sense of God's goodness, and mercy towards men; and amongst all the evidences of that, there is none like the sending, and giving of his Son for man's redemption: therefore the Apostle having mentioned that, insists further in it: and in these words, expresses, 1. The purpose; 2. The performance; and 3. The application of it.

1. The purpose or *decree foreknown;* but it is well rendered, *fore-ordained*, for this knowing is decreeing, and there is little either solid truth or profit in the distinguishing them.

We say usually, that where there is little wisdom there is much chance, and comparatively amongst men, some are far more foresighted, and of further reach than others; yet the wisest, and most provident men, both wanting skill to design all things aright, and power to act as they contrive, meet with many unexpected casualties, and frequent disappointments in their undertakings. But with God, where both wisdom and power are infinite, there can be neither any chance, nor resistance from without, nor any imperfection at all in the contrivance of things within himself, that can give cause to add or abate or alter any thing in the frame of his purposes. The model of the whole world, and of all the course of time was with him one and the same from all eternity, and whatsoever is brought to pass, is exactly answerable to that pattern, for with him *there is no change nor shadow of turning*[a]. There is nothing dark to the Father of lights; he sees at one view through all things, and all ages, from the beginning of time to the end of it, yea, from eternity to eternity. And this incomprehensible wisdom is too wonderful for us, we do but childishly stammer when we offer to speak of it.

It is no wonder that men beat their own brains, and knock their heads one against another, in the contest of their opinions to little purpose, in their several mouldings of God's decree. Is not this to

[a] Jam. i. 17.

cut and square God's thoughts to ours, and examine his sovereign purposes by the low principles of human wisdom? How much more learned than all such knowledge is the Apostle's ignorance, when he cries out, *O! the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out*[b]. Why then should any man debate what place, in the series of God's decree, is to be assigned to this purpose of sending his Son in the flesh? Let us rather (seeing it is manifest that it was for the redemption of lost mankind) admire that same love of God to mankind, that appears in that purpose of our recovery by the *word made flesh*; that before man had made himself miserable, yea, before either he or the world was made, this thought of boundless love was in the bosom of God to send his Son forth from thence, to bring fallen man out of misery, and restore him to happiness; and to do this, not only by taking on his nature, but the curse; to shift it off from us that were sunk under it, and to bear it himself, and by bearing it to take it away, *he laid on him the iniquity of us all*, and to this he was appointed, says the Apostle[c].

Before the foundation of the world.] This we understand by faith, that *the world was framed by the word of God*[d]. Although the learned probably think it evincible by human reason, yet some of those that have gloried most in that, and are reputed generally masters of reason, have not seen it by that light. Therefore, that we may have a divine belief of it, we must learn it from the word of God, and be persuaded of its truth by the Spirit of God, that the whole world, and all things in it, were drawn out of nothing by his Almighty power, who is the only eternal and increated Being, and therefore the fountain and source of Being to all things.

Foundation.] In this word is plainly intimated the resemblance of the world to a building, and such

[b] Rom. xi. 33. [c] Heb. liii. 2. [d] Heb. xi. 3.

a building it is, as doth evidence the greatness of him that framed it, so spacious, rich, and comely; so firm a foundation, raised to so high and stately a roof, and set with variety of stars, as with jewels, therefore called, as some conceive it[e], *the work of his fingers*, to express the curious artifice that appears in them. Though naturalists have attempted to give the reason of the earth's stability from its heaviness, which stays it necessarily in the lowest part of the world, yet that abates not our admiring the wisdom and power of God, in laying its foundation so, and establishing it; for it is his will that is the first cause of that, its nature; and hath appointed that to be the property of its heaviness, to fix it there; and therefore *Job* alledges this amongst the wonderful works of God, and evidences of his power, that *he hangeth the earth upon nothing*[f].

Before there was time, or place, or any creature, God, the blessed Trinity, was in himself (and as the prophet speaks[g], *inhabiting eternity*, completely happy in himself; but intending to manifest and communicate his goodness, he gave Being to the world, and to time with it; made all to set forth his goodness, and the most excellent of his creatures to contemplate, and enjoy it: but amongst all the works he intended before time, and in time effected, this is the master-piece, that is here said to be foreordained, the manifesting of God in the flesh, for man's redemption; and that by his Son Jesus Christ, as *the first-born amongst many brethren*[h]. That those appointed for salvation should be rescued from the common misery, and be made one mystical body whereof Christ is the head, and so entitled to that everlasting glory and happiness that he hath purchased for them.

This, I say, is the great work, wherein all those glorious attributes shine jointly, the wisdom, and power, and goodness, and justice, and mercy of God. As in great maps, or pictures, you will see the border decorated with meadows, and fountains,

[e] Psal. viii. [f] Job xxvi. 7. [g] Isa. lvii. 15. [h] Rom. viii. 29.

and flowers, &c. represented in it; but in the middle you have the main design: Thus is this fore-ordained redemption amongst the works of God; all his other works in the world, all the beauty of the creatures, and the succession of ages, and things that come to pass in them, are but as the border to this as the main-piece. But as a foolish unskilful beholder, not discerning the excellency of the principal piece in such maps or pictures, gazes only on the fair border, and goes no further: thus do the greatest part of us, our eyes are taken with the goodly show of the world and appearance of earthly things; but as for this great work of God, Christ *fore-ordained*, and in time sent for our redemption, though it most deserves our attentive regard, yet we do not view and consider it as we ought.

2. We have the performance of that purpose, *was manifested in the last times for you.* He was manifested both by his incarnation, according to that word of the Apostle St. *Paul, manifested in the flesh*[1], and manifested by his marvellous works and doctrine, by his sufferings and death, resurrection and ascension, by the sending down of the Holy Ghost according to his promise, and by the preaching of the Gospel, in the fulness of time that God had appointed, wherein all the prophecies that foretold his coming, and all the types, and ceremonies that prefigured him, had their accomplishment.

The times of the gospel are often called the *last times* by the prophets; for that the jewish priesthood and ceremonies being abolished, that which succeeded was appointed by God to remain the same to the end of the world. Besides this, the time of our Saviour's incarnation may be called the *last times*, because although it were not near the end of time by many ages, yet in all probability it is much nearer the end of time than the beginning of it. Some resemble the time of his sufferings in

[1] 1 Tim. iii. 16, &c.

the end of the world, to the paschal lamb in the evening.

It was doubtless the fit time; but notwithstanding the schoolmen offer at reasons to prove the fitness of it, as their humour is to prove all things, none dare I think conclude, but if God had so appointed, it might have been either sooner, or later; and our safest way is to rest in that, that it was the fit time, because so it pleased him, and to seek no other reason, why having promised the Messiah so quickly after man's fall, he deferred his coming about four thousand years, and a great part of that time shut up the knowledge of himself, and the true religion, within the narrow compass of that one nation of which Christ was to be born: of these and such like things we can give no other reason but that which he teacheth us in a like case, *even so father because it seemeth good unto thee*[k].

3. The application of this manifestation, *For you.*] The apostle represents these things to those he writes to, particularly for their use; therefore he applies it to them, but without prejudice of the believers that went before, or of those that were to follow in after ages. He that is here said to be *fore-appointed* before the foundation of the world, is therefore called, *a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*[l]. And as the virtue of his death looks backward to all preceding ages, whose faith and sacrifices looked forward to it; so the same death is of force and perpetual value to the end of the world: *After he had offered one sacrifice for sins*, says the apostle to the *Hebrews*[m], *he sat down for ever on the right hand of God; for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.* The cross on which he was extended points in the length of it to heaven and earth, reconciling them together, and in the breadth of it to former and following ages, as being equally salvation to both.

In this appropriating and peculiar interest in Jesus Christ lies our happiness, without which it

[k] Matt. xi. 26. [l] Rev. xiii. 8. [m] Chap. x. 12. 14.

avails not that he was ordained from eternity, and in time manifested. It is not the general contemplation, but the peculiar possession of Christ, that gives both solid comfort, and strong persuasion to obedience and holiness, which is here the apostle's particular scope.

Ver. 21. *Who by him do believe in God that raised him up from the dead and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.*

Now because it is faith that gives the soul this particular title to Jesus Christ, the apostle adds that, to declare who he meant by *you*, (says he) *who by him do believe in God*, &c.

Where we have, 1. The compleat object of faith. 2. The ground or warrant of it. The object, *God in Christ.* The ground or warrant, *In that he raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory.*

1. The compleat object of faith. A man may have (living out of Christ) yea, he must, he cannot chuse but have a conviction within him that there is a God, and further he may have, even out of Christ, some kind of belief of those things that are spoken concerning God; but to repose on God, as his God, and his salvation, which is indeed to believe in him, this cannot be, but where Christ is the *medium* through which we look upon God; for so long as we look upon God through our own guiltiness, we can see nothing but his wrath, and apprehend him as an armed enemy; and therefore are so far from resting on him, as our happiness, that the more we view it, it puts us upon the more speed to fly from him, and to cry out, *Who can dwell with everlasting burnings, and abide with a consuming fire*[a]? But our Saviour taking sin out of the way, puts himself betwixt our sins and God, and so makes a wonderful change of our apprehension of him. When you look through a red glass, the whole heavens seem bloody, but through pure uncoloured

[a] Isa. xxxiii. 14.

glass, you receive the clear light, that is so refreshing and comfortable to behold. When sin unpardoned is betwixt, and we look on God through that, we can perceive nothing but anger and enmity in his countenance: but make Christ once the *medium*, our pure Redeemer, and through him, as clear transparent glass, the beams of God's favourable countenance shine in upon the soul; the Father cannot look upon his well-beloved Son, but graciously and pleasingly. God looks on us out of Christ, sees us rebels, and fit to be condemned, we look on God as being just and powerful to punish us; but when Christ is betwixt, God looks on us in him, as justified, and we look on God in him as pacified, and see the smiles of his favourable countenance: take Christ out, all is terrible; interpose him, all is full of peace: therefore set him always betwixt, and by him we shall believe in God.

2. The warrant and ground of believing in God by Christ is this, that God *raised him from the dead and gave him glory*, which evidences the full satisfaction of his death, and in all that work both in his humiliation and exaltation, standing in our room, we may repute it his as ours: if all is paid that could be exacted of him, and therefore he set free from death, then are we acquitted, and have nothing to pay: if he was raised from the dead, and exalted to glory, then so shall we; he hath taken possession of that glory for us, and we may judge ourselves possessed in it already, because he our head possesseth it. And this the last words of the verse confirm to us, implying this to be the very purpose and end for which God having given him to death, *raised him up and gave him glory;* it is for this end expressly that *our faith and hope might be in God:* the last end is, that we may have life and glory through him; the nearer end, that in the mean while, till we attain them, we may have firm belief and hope of them, and rest on God as the giver of them, and so in part enjoy them before hand, and be upheld in our joy and conflicts by the comfort of them. And as St. *Ste-*

phen in his vision[b]. Faith doth, in a spiritual way, look through all the visible heavens, and see Christ at the Father's right hand, and is comforted by that in the greatest troubles, though it were amidst a shower of stones, as St. *Stephen* was. The comfort is no less than this, that being by faith made one with Christ, his present glory wherein he sits at the Father's right hand, is assurance to us, *That where he is we shall be also*[c].

Ver. 22. *Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.*

JESUS CHRIST is made unto us of God, *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*[a]. It is a known truth, and yet very needful to be often represented to us, that redemption and holiness are undivided companions, yea, that we are redeemed on purpose for this end, that we should be holy. The pressing of this, we see, is here the apostle's scope; and having by that reason enforced it in the general, he now takes that as concluded and confessed, and so makes use of it particularly to exhort to the exercise of that main christian grace of *brotherly love.*

The obedience and holiness mentioned in the foregoing verses, comprehend the whole duties and frame of a christian life towards God and men; and having urged that in the general, he specifies this grace of mutual christian love, as the great evidence of their sincerity, and the truth of their love to God: for men are subject to much hypocrisy this way, and deceive themselves, if they find themselves diligent in religious exercises, they scarce once ask their hearts, how they stand affected this way, namely, in love to their brethren. They can come constantly to the church, and pray, it may be,

[b] Acts vii. 55. [c] John xiv. 3. [a] 1 Cor. i. 30.

at home too, and yet cannot find in their hearts to forgive an injury.

As forgiving injuries argues the truth of piety, so it is that which makes all converse both sweet and profitable, and besides, it graces and commends men and their holy profession to such as are without, and strangers to it, yea, even to their enemies.

Therefore is it that our Saviour doth so much recommend this to his disciples, and they to others, as we see in all their epistles. He gives it them as the very badge and livery by which they should be known for his followers, ***By this shall** all men know **that ye are my disciples, if ye love** one another*[b]. And St. *Paul* is frequent in exhorting to and extolling this grace[c]. He calls it ***the bond of perfectness***[d], that grace which unites and binds all together. So doth our apostle here, and often in this and the other epistle; and that beloved disciple St. *John*, who leaned on our Saviour's breast, drank deep of that spring of love that was here, and therefore it streams forth so abundantly in his writings, they contain nothing so much as this divine doctrine of love.

We have here, 1. The due qualifications of it. 2. A Christian's obligation to it.

I. The *qualifications* are three; namely, *sincerity*, *purity*, and *fervency*. The sincerity expressed in the former clause of the verse, ***unfeigned** love*, and repeated again in the latter part, that it be *with a pure heart*, as the purity is included *in fervency*.

1. Love must be ***unfeigned***. It appears that this dissimulation is a disease that is very incident in this particular. The apostle St. *Paul* hath the same word[e], and the apostle St. *John* to the same sense[f]. That it have that double reality, which is opposed to double dissembled love; that it be cordial and effectual; that the professing of it arise from truth of

[b] John xiii. 35. [c] Rom. xii. 10. and xiii. 8. 1 Cor. i. 13. Gal. v. 13. Eph. iv. 2. and in many other places. [d] Col. iii. 14.
[e] Rom. xii. 9. [f] 1 John iii. 18.

affection, and, as much as may be, be seconded with action; "that both the heart and the hand may be rather the seal of it than the tongue: not court holy-water, an empty noise of service and affection, that fears nothing more than to be put upon trial. Although thy brother with whom thou conversest cannot, it may be, see through thy false appearances, he that commands this love, looks chiefly within, seeks it there, and if he find it not there, hates them most that most pretend it: so that the art of dissembling, though never so well studied, cannot pass in this king's court, to whom all hearts are open, and all desires known. When, after variances, men are brought to an agreement, they are much subject to this, rather to cover their remaining malices with superficial verbal forgiveness, than to dislodge them, and free the heart of them. This is a poor self-deceit; as the philosopher said to him, that being ashamed that he was espied by him in a tavern in the outer room, withdrew himself to the inner, he called after him, "That is not the way out; the more you "go that way, you will be the further within it." When hatreds upon admonition are not thrown out, but retire inward to hide themselves, they grow deeper and stronger than before; and those constrained semblances of reconcilement are but a false healing, do but skin the wound over, and therefore it usually breaks forth worse again.

How few are there that have truly maliceless hearts, and find this entire upright affection towards their brethren meeting them in their whole conversation, this *law of love* deeply impressed on their hearts, and from thence expressed in their words and actions, and that is *unfeigned love* as real to their brethren as to themselves.

2. It must be *pure*, from a pure heart; this is not all one with the former, as some take it. It is true, doubleness and hypocrisy is an impurity, and a great one; but all impurity is not doubleness; one may really mean that friendship and affection he expresses, and yet it may be most contrary to that

which is here required, because *impure;* such a *brotherly love* as that of *Simeon* and *Levi*, brethren in iniquity, as the expressing them *brethren*[g], is taken to mean. When hearts are cemented together by impurity itself, by ungodly conversation and society in sin, as in uncleanness or drunkenness, &c. this is a swinish fraternity and friendship that is contracted, as it were, by wallowing in the same mire. Call it good fellowship, or what you will, all the fruit that in the end can be expected out of unholy friendliness and fellowship in sinning together, is to be tormented together, and to add each to the torment of another.

The mutual love of Christians must be pure, arising from such causes as are pure and spiritual, from the sense of our Saviour's command and of his example; for he himself joins that with it, *A new commandment give I you*, saith he, *that as I have loved you, so you also love one another*[h]. They that are indeed lovers of God are united; by that their hearts meet in him, as in one center. They cannot but love one another: where a godly man sees his Father's image, he is forced to love it; he loves those he perceives godly, so as to delight in them, because that image is in them, and those that appear destitute of it, he loves them so, as to wish them partakers of that image. And this is all for God; he loves *amicum in Deo, & inimicum propter Deum:* that is, he loves a friend in God, and an enemy for God. And as the Christian's love is pure in its cause, so in its effects and exercise; his society and converse with any tends mainly to this, that he may mutually help, and be helped in the knowledge and love of God, he desires most that he and his brethren may jointly mind their journey heavenwards, and further one another in their way to the full enjoyment of God. And this is truly the love of a pure heart, that both begins and ends in God.

3. We must love *fervently*, not after a cold indif-

[g] Gen. xlix. [h] John xiii. 34.

ferent manner. Let the love of your brethren be as a fire within you, consuming that selfishness that is so contrary to it, and is so natural to men, let it set your thoughts on work to study how to do others good; let your love be an active love, intense within you, and extending itself in doing good to the souls and bodies of your brethren as they need, and you are able; *Alium re, alium consilio, alium gratiâ*[i].

It is self-love that contracts the heart, and shuts out all other love both of God and man, save only so far as our own interest carries, and that is still self-love: but the love of God dilates the heart, purifies love, and extends it to all men, but after a special manner directs it to those that are more peculiarly beloved of him, and that is here the particular love required.

II. The christian's *obligation* to this love, intimated in the words, *love of the brethren.* In this is implied our obligation to it after a special manner, to love those of *the household of faith*, because they are our brethren. This includes not only, as *Abraham* said, *that there ought to be no strife*[k], but it binds most strongly to this sincere and pure and fervent love; and therefore the apostle in the next verse repeats expressly the doctrine of the mysterious new birth, and explains it more fully, which he hath mentioned in the entrance of the epistle, and again referred to, *v.* 14. 17.

There is in this fervent love, sympathy with the griefs of our brethren, desire and endeavour to help them, bearing their infirmities, and recovering them too, if it may be; raising them when they fall, admonishing and reproving them as is needful, sometimes sharply, and yet still in love; rejoicing in their good, in their gifts and graces, so far from envying them, that we be glad as if they were our own; there is the same blood running in their veins: you have the same Father, and the same Spirit within you, and the same Jesus Christ the head of that glorious

[i] As Sen. de benef. lib. 1. cap. 2. [k] Gen. xiii. 8.

fraternity, *The first-born among many brethren*[l], of which the apostle saith, that *he hath recollected into one, all things in heaven and in earth*[m]. The word is, *gathered them into one head;* and so suits very fitly to express our union in him. *In whom,* says he in that same epistle[n], *the whole body is fitly compacted together;* and adds, that which agrees to our purpose, that this body *grows up and edifies itself in love.* All the members receive spirits from the same head, and are useful and serviceable one to another, and to the whole body. Thus these brethren receiving of the same spirit from their head Christ, are most strongly bent to the good one of another. If there be but a thorn in the foot, the back boweth, the head stoops down, the eyes look, the hands reach to it, and endeavour its help and ease. In a word, all the members partake of the good and evil one of another. Now by how much this body is more spiritual and lively, so much the stronger must the union and love of the parts of it be each to other. You are brethren by the same new birth, and born to the same inheritance, and such an one as shall not be an apple of strife amongst you, to beget debates and contentions: No, it is enough for all, and none shall prejudge another, but you shall have joy in the happiness one of another; seeing you shall then be perfect in love, all harmony, no difference in judgment nor affection, all your harps tuned to the same new song, which you shall sing for ever. Let that love begin here, which shall never end.

And this same union (I conceive) is likewise expressed in the first words of the verse: seeing you are partakers of that work of sanctification by the same word, and the same Spirit that works it in all the faithful, and by that are called and incorporated into that fraternity; therefore live in it, and like it. You are purified to it, therefore love one another after that same manner purely. Let the profane world scoff that name of *brethren*, you will not be so foolish as to be scorned out of it, being so honourable and

[l] Rom. viii. 29. [m] Eph. i. 10. [n] Chap. iv. 16.

happy; and the day is at hand wherein those that scoff you, would give much more, than all that the best of them ever possessed in the world, to be admitted into your number.

Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit.] Here is, 1. The chief seat, or subject of the work of sanctificaton, *the soul.* 2. The subordinate means, *truth.* 3. The nature of it, *obeying of truth.* 4. The chief worker of it, *the Holy Spirit.*

For the *first*, the chief seat of sanctification, *the soul*: it is no doubt a work that goes through the whole man, renews and purifies all[o]. But because it purifies the soul, therefore it is that it does purify all. There impurity begins[p], not only evil thoughts, but all evil actions come forth from the heart, which is there all one with the soul; and therefore this purifying begins there, *makes the tree good that the fruit may be good.* It is not so much external performances that make the difference between men, as their inward temper; we meet here in the same place, and all partake of the same word and prayer: But how wide a difference is there, in God's eye, betwixt an unwash'd profane heart in the same exercise, and a soul purified in some measure *in obeying the truth*, and desirous to be further purified by further obeying it.

Secondly, That which is the subordinate means of this purity, is the *truth*, or the word of God. It is truth, and pure in itself, and begets truth and purity in the heart, by teaching it concerning the holy and pure nature of God, shewing it and his holy will, which is to us the rule of purity. And by representing Jesus Christ unto us as the fountain of our purity and renovation, from whose fulness we *may receive grace for grace*[q].

Thirdly, The nature of this work; that wherein the very being of this purifying consists, is, *the receiving, or obeying of this truth.* So[r] where it is

[o] Heb. x. 22. 2 Cor. vii. 1. [p] Matth. xv. 18. [q] John i. 16. [r] Gal. iii. 1.

put for right believing. The chief point of obedience is believing; the proper obedience to truth, is, to give credit to it; and this divine belief doth necessarily bring the whole soul into obedience and conformity to that pure truth, which is in the word: and so the very purifying and renewing of the soul is this obedience of faith, as unbelief is its chief impurity and disobedience; therefore [s], Faith is said to *purify the heart.*

Fourthly, The chief worker of this sanctification, is, *the Holy Spirit of God*, they are said here to *purify themselves.* For it is certain and undeniable, that the soul itself doth act in believing or obeying the truth, but not of itself, it is not the first principle of motion. They purify their souls, but it is *by the Spirit.* They do it by his enlivening power, and a purifying virtue received from him. Faith, or obeying the truth, works this purity: but the Holy Ghost works that faith; as in the forecited place, God is said to *purify their hearts by faith*, ver. 8. He doth that by giving them the Holy Ghost. The truth is pure, and purifying, yet can it not of itself purify the soul, but by the obeying or believing it; and the soul cannot obey or believe but by the Spirit, which works in it that faith, and by that faith purifies it, and works love in it. The impurity and earthliness of mens minds is the great cause of disunion and disaffection amongst them, and of all their strifes [t].

This Spirit is that fire that refines and purifies the soul from the dross of earthly desires that possess it, and sublimates it to the love of God, and of his Saints because they are his, and are purified by the same Spirit. It is the property of fire to draw together things of the same kind; the outward fire of enmities, and persecution that are kindled against the godly by the world, doth somewhat, and if it were more considered by them, would do more, in this knitting their hearts closer one to another;

[s] Act. xv. 9. [t] Ja. iv. 1.

but it is this inward pure and purifying fire of the Holy Ghost that doth most powerfully unite them.

The true reason why there is so little truth of this christian mutual love amongst those that are called christians, is, because there is so little of this purifying obedience to the truth whence it flows; faith unfeigned would beget this love unfeigned: men may exhort to them both, but they require the hand of God to work them in the heart.

Ver. 23. *Being born again, not of corruptible seed: but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

THE two things that make up the Apostle's exhortation, are the very sum of a christian's duty, to walk as obedient children towards God, and loving brethren one towards another: and that it may yet have the deeper impression, he here represents to them anew that new birth he mentioned before, by which they are the children of God, and so brethren.

We shall first speak of this regeneration: And then of the seed. 1*st*, Of the regeneration itself: this is the great dignity of believers, that they are the sons of God[u], and the great evidence of the love of God, that he hath bestowed this dignity on them[x]. For they are no way needful to him; he had from eternity a Son perfectly like himself, *the character of his person*[y], and one Spirit proceeding from both; and there is no creation, neither the first, nor the second can add any thing to those, and their happiness; it is most true of that blessed trinity, *Satis amplum alter alteri theatrum sumus.* But the gracious purpose of God, to impart his goodness appears in this, that he hath made himself such a multitude of sons, not only angels that are so called, but man, a little lower than they in nature, yet dignified with this name in his creation[z],

[u] Joh. i. 12. [x] 1 Joh. iii. 1. [y] Heb. i. 3. [z] St. Luke iii. 38.

Which was the son of Adam, which was the Son of God. He had not only the impression of God's footsteps, (as they speak) which all the creatures have, but of his image; and most of all in this is his rich grace magnified, that sin having defaced that image, and so degraded man from his honour, and divested him of that title of sonship, and stampt our polluted nature with the marks of vileness and bondage, yea, with the very image of satan, rebellion, and enmity against God; that out of mankind thus ruined and degenerated, God should raise to himself a new race and generation of sons.

For this design was the *word made flesh*[a]. The Son made man, to make men the sons of God; and it is by him alone we are restored to this; they that receive him, receive with him, and in him, this privilege, *v.* 12. And therefore it is a sonship by adoption, and is so called in scripture, in difference from his eternal and ineffable generation, who is, and was *the only begotten Son of God*: yet that we may know that this divine adoption is not a mere outward relative name, as that of men, the sonship of the Saints is here, and often elsewhere in Scripture expressed by *new generation*, and *new birth*. They are *begotten of God*[b]. A new being, a spiritual life is communicated to them, they have in them of their Father's spirit, and this is derived to them through Christ, and therefore called his Spirit[c]. They are not only accounted of the family of God by adoption, but by this new birth they are indeed his children, partakers of the divine nature, as our Apostle expresseth it.

Now though it be easy to speak and hear the words of this doctrine, yet the truth itself that is in it, is so high and mysterious, that it is altogether impossible, without a portion of this new nature to conceive of it. Corrupt nature cannot understand it. What wonder that there is nothing of it in the subtilest schools of philosophers, when a very *doctor*

[a] Joh. i. 12, 13, 14. [b] Joh. i. 13. 1 Joh. ii. 29.
[c] Gal. iv. 6.

in Israel mistook it grosly[d]. It is indeed a great mystery, and he that was the sublimest of all the Evangelists, and therefore called the divine, the soaring eagle (as they compare him) he is more abundant in this subject than the rest.

And the most profitable way of considering this regeneration and sonship, is certainly to follow the light of those holy writings, and not to jangle in disputes about the order and manner of it, of which though somewhat may be profitably said, and safely, namely, so much as the scripture speaks, yet much that is spoke of it, and debated by many, is but an useless expence of time and pains. What those previous dispositions are, and how far they go, and where is the mark or point of difference betwixt them, and the infusion of spiritual life, I conceive not so easily determinable.

If naturalists and physicians cannot agree upon the order of formation of the parts of the human body in the womb, how much less can we be peremptory in the other? If there be so many wonders (as indeed there be) in the natural structure and frame of man, how much richer in wonders must this divine and supernatural generation be, see how *David* speaks of the former[e]. Things spiritual being more refined than material things, their workmanship must be far more wonderful and curious. But then it must be viewed with a spiritual eye. There is an unspeakable lustre and beauty of the new creature, by the mixture of all divine graces, each setting off another, as so many rich several colours in embroidery; but who can trace that invisible hand that works it, so as to determine of the order, and to say which was first, which second, and so on, whether faith, or repentance, and all graces, *&c?* This is certain, that these and all graces do inseparably make up the same work, and are all in the new formation of every soul that is born again.

If the ways of God's universal providence be

[d] Joh. iii. x. [e] Psal. xiv. 15.

untraceable, then most of all the workings of his grace are conducted in a secret unperceivable way in this new birth: he gives this spiritual being as the dew which is silently and insensibly formed, and this generation of the Sons of God is compared to it by the psalmist[f]. They have this original from Heaven as the dew[g]. *Except a man be born from above, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* And it is the peculiar work of the Spirit of God, as he himself speaks of the dew to *Job*[h], *Hath the rain a father, or who hath begotten the drops of the dew?* The sharpest wits are to seek in the knowledge and discovery of it, as *Job* speaketh of a way that no fowl knoweth, and *which the vulture's eye hath not seen*[i].

To contest much, how in this regeneration he works upon the will, and renews it, is to little purpose, provided this be granted, that it is in his power to regenerate, and renew a man at his pleasure: and how is it possible not to grant this, unless we will run into that error to think, that God hath made a creature too hard for himself to rule, or hath willingly exempted it? And shall the works of the Almighty, especially this work, wherein most of all others he glories, fail in his hand, and remain imperfect? Shall there be any abortive births whereof God is the Father? *Shall I bring to the birth* (says he) *and not cause to bring forth*[k]*?* No, no sinner so dead, but there is virtue in his hand to revive out of the very stones. Though the most impenitent hearts are as stones within them, yet he *can make of them children to* Abraham[l]. He can dig out *the heart of stone, and put a heart of flesh*[m], in its place, otherwise he would not have made such a promise[n]. *Not of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* If his sovereign will is not a sufficient principle of this regeneration, why then says the Apostle St. *James, Of his own will begat he us,* and

[f] Psal. cx. 3. [g] Joh. iii. 3. [h] Job xxxviii. 28.
[i] Job. xxviii. 7. [k] Isa. lxvi. 9. [l] Luke iii. 8.
[m] Ezek. xxxvi. 26. [n] Joh. i. 13.

he adds the subordinate cause, *by the word of truth*[o], which is here called the immortal seed of this new birth.

Therefore it is that the Lord hath appointed the continuance of the ministry of this word, to the end that his church may be still fruitful bringing forth sons unto him. That the assemblies of his people may be like *Flocks of sheep coming up from the washing, none barren amongst them*[p].

Though the ministers of this word, by reason of their employment in dispensing it, have by the scriptures the relation of parents imparted to them, which is an exceeding great dignity for them as they are called *co-workers* with God. And the same Apostle that writes so, calls the *Galatians his little children of whom he travelled in birth again till Christ were formed in them;* and the ministers of God have often very much pain in this travel, yet the privilege of the Father of Spirits remains untouched, which is effectually to beget again these same Spirits which he creates, and to make that seed of the word fruitful that way, where, and when he will. The preacher of the word, be he never so powerful, can cast this seed only into the ear, his hand reaches no further, and the hearer, by his attention, may convey it into his head; but it is the supreme Father and teacher above that carries it into the heart, the only soil wherein it proves lively and fruitful. One man cannot reach the heart of another, how should he then renew its fruitfulness? If natural births have been always acknowledged to belong to God's prerogative[q], *Lo children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward.* And so *Jacob* answered wisely to his wife's foolish passion, *Am I in God's stead*[r]*?* How much more is this new birth wholly dependent on his hand?

But though this word cannot beget without him, yet it is by this word that he begets, and ordinarily

[o] Ja. i. 18. [p] Cant. iv. 2. [q] Psal. cxxvii. 3. [r] Gen. xxx. 2.

not without it. It is true that the substantial eternal word is to us (as we said) the spring of this new birth and life, the head from whom the Spirits of this supernatural life flow; but that by the word here is meant the Gospel, the Apostle puts out of doubt, *verse* last, *And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.* Therefore thus is this word really the seed of this new birth, because it contains and declares that other word, the Son of God as our life. The word is spoken in common, and so is the same to all hearers; but then all hearts being naturally shut against it, God doth by his own hand open some to receive it, and mixes it with faith, and those it renews, and restoreth in them the image of God, draws the traces of it anew, and makes them the Sons of God. *My doctrine shall drop as the dew*, says *Moses*[s], the word as a heavenly dew not falling beside, but dropt into the heart by the hand of God's own Spirit, makes it all become spiritual and heavenly, and turns it into one of those drops of dew that the children of God are compared to[t]. *Thou hast the dew of thy youth.*

The natural estate of the soul is darkness, and the word as a divine light shining into it, transforms the soul into its own nature; so that as the word is called light, so is the soul that is renewed by it, *Ye were darkness, but now are ye*, not only enlightened, but *light in the Lord*[u]. All the evils of the natural mind are often comprised under the name of darkness and error, and therefore is the whole work of conversion likewise signified by light and truth, *he begat us by the word of truth*[x], alluding to the first *fiat lux*, or *let there be light*, in the creation: the word brought within the soul by the Spirit lets it see its own necessity and Christ's sufficiency, convinceth it thoroughly and causeth it to cast over itself upon him for life; and this is the very begetting of it again to eternal life.

So that this efficacy of the word to prove suc-

[s] Deut. xxxii. 2. [t] Psal. cx. 3. [u] Eph. v. 8.
[x] Ja. i. 18. So 2 Cor. iv. 6.

cessful seed, doth not hang upon the different abilities of preachers, their having more or less rhetorick or learning. It is true, eloquence hath a great advantage in civil and moral things to persuade, and to draw the hearers by the ears, almost which way it will: but in this spiritual work to revive a soul, to beget it anew, the influence of Heaven is the main thing requisite; there is no way so common and plain (being warranted by God in the delivery of saving truth) but the Spirit of God can revive the soul by it; and the most skilful and authoritative way, yea, being withal very spiritual, yet may effect nothing, because left alone to itself: one word of holy scripture, or of truth conform to it, may be the principle of regeneration, to him that hath heard multitudes of excellent Sermons, and hath often read the whole Bible, and hath still continued unchanged. If the Spirit of God preach that one, or any such word to the soul, *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever should believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*[y], it will be cast down with the fear of perishing, and driven out of itself by that, and raised up and drawn to Jesus Christ by the hope of everlasting life; it will believe on him that it may have life, and be inflamed with the love of God, and give itself to him, that so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son to purchase us that everlasting life. Thus may that word prove this immortal seed, which though very often read and heard before, was but a dead letter. A drop of those liquors, that are called Spirits, operates more than large draughts of other waters; one word spoke by the Lord to the heart, is all Spirit, and doth that which whole streams of man's eloquence could never effect.

In hearing of the word, men look usually too much upon men, and forget from what spring the word hath its power; they observe too narrowly the different hand of the sowers, and too little depend

[y] Joh. iii. 15.

on his hand, who is great Lord of both seed-time and harvest: be it sown by a weak hand, or a stronger, the immortal seed is still the same; yea, suppose the worst, that it be a foul hand that sows it, that the preacher himself be not so sanctified, and of so edifying a life as you would wish, yet the seed itself being good, contracts no defilement, and may be effectual to regeneration in some, and strengthening of others; although he that is not renewed by it himself, cannot have much hope of such success, nor reap much comfort by it, and usually doth not seek nor regard it much; but all instruments are alike in an Almighty hand.

Hence learn, 1. That true conversion is not so slight a work, as we commonly account it. It is not the outward change of some bad customs, which gains the name of a reformed man, in the ordinary dialect; it is a new birth and being, and elsewhere called *a new creation.* Though it be but a change in qualities, yet it is such a one, and the qualities so far distant from what they before were, that it bears the name of the most substantial productions, from *children of disobedience*, and that which is linked with it, *Heirs of wrath*, to be *Sons of God, and heirs of glory:* they have a new Spirit given, a free princely noble Spirit, as the word is[z], and this Spirit acts in their life and actions.

2. Consider this dignity, and be kindled with an ambition worthy of it. How doth a christian pity that poor vanity that men make so much noise about, of their kindred, and extraction? This is worth glorying in indeed, to be of the highest blood-royal, Sons of the King of Kings by this new birth, and in the nearest relation to him; this adds matchless honour to that birth which is so honourable in the esteem of the world.

But we all pretend to be of this number. Would we not study to cozen ourselves, the discovery whether we are, or not, would not be so hard.

In many their false confidence is too evident;

[z] Psal. li. 10.

and there is no appearance of the Spirit of God, not a footstep like his leading, and of that character, *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God*[a], not a lineament of God's visage, as their Father, *if ye know that he is righteous*[b], *Ye know then that every one that doth righteousness is born of him.* And so on the other hand, how contrary to the most holy God, the lover and fountain of holiness, are they that swinishly love to wallow in the mire of unholiness? Is swearing and cursing the accent of the regenerate, the children of God? No, it is the language of hell. Do children delight to indignify and dishonour their father's name? No. Earthly mindedness is a countersign. Shall the king's children, *They that were brought up in scarlet* (as *Jeremy* laments) *embrace the dunghill*[c]*?* Princes by their high birth and education, have usually their hearts filled with far higher thoughts than mean persons: the children of the poorer sort being pinched that way, their greatest thoughts as they grow up, are ordinarily how they shall shift to live, how they shall get bread; but princes think either of the conquest, or governing of kingdoms. Are you not born to a better inheritance, (if indeed born again) why then do you vilify yourselves? Why are you not more in prayer? There are no dumb children among those that are born of God; they have all that Spirit of prayer by which they not only speak, but *cry, Abba Father.*

2dly, We come to consider the seed of this regeneration, *the word of God.* The most part of us esteem the preaching of *the word*, as a transient discourse, that amuses us for an hour. We look for no more, and therefore we find no more. We receive it not as the immortal seed of our regeneration, as *the ingrafted word that is able to save our souls*[d]. Oh! learn to reverence this holy and happy ordinance of God, this word of life, and know, that they

[a] Rom. viii. 14. [b] St. Joh. ij. 29. [c] Lament. iv. 5. [d] Ja. i. 21.

that are not regenerated, and so saved by it, shall be judged by it.

Not of corruptible seed.] It is a main cause of the unsuitable and unworthy behaviour of christians (those that profess themselves such) that a great part of them either do not know, or at least do not seriously, and frequently consider, what is indeed the estate and quality of christians, how excellent and of what descent their new nature is; therefore they are often to be remembered of this. Our Apostle here doth so, and by it binds on all his exhortations.

Of this new being we have here these two things: 1. Its high original from God, *begotten again of his word:* 2. That which so much commends good things, its duration, and this follows of the other; for if the principle of this life, *be incorruptible*, itself must be so too. The word of God is not only a living and ever abiding word in itself; but likewise in reference to this new birth, and spiritual life of a christian: And so that which is here spoken of it is intended, and it is therefore called not only an abiding word, but *incorruptible seed*, which expressly relates to regeneration. And because we are most sensible of the good and evil of things by comparison, the everlastingness of the word, and that spiritual life which it begets, is set off by the frailty and shortness of natural life, and all the good that concerns it. This he expresseth in the words of *Isaiah* in the next *verse.*

Ver. 24. *For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass, the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away.*

In expressing the vanity and frailty of the natural life of man, it agrees very well with the subject to call him *flesh*, giving to the whole man the name of his corruptible part; both to make the wretched and perishing condition of this life more sensible, and man the more humble by it: for though by providing all for the flesh, and bestowing his

whole time in the endeavours which are of the flesh's concernment, he remembers it too much, and forgets his spiritual and immortal part; yet in that over eager care for the flesh, in some sense, he seems to forget that he is flesh, or at least that flesh is perishing; because flesh, extending his desires and projects so far for the flesh as if it were immortal, and should always abide to enjoy and use these things; as the philosopher said of his countrymen, upbraiding at once their surfeitings and excess in feasting, and their sumptuousness in building: "That "they eat as if they meant to die to-morrow, and "yet built as if they were never to die." Thus in men's immoderate pursuits of earth, they seem both to forget that they are any thing else beside flesh, and in this sense too, to forget that they are flesh, that is mortal and perishing; they neither rightly remember their immortality nor their mortality. If we consider what it is to be flesh, the naming of that were sufficient to the purpose: *All man is flesh;* But it is plainer thus, *All flesh is grass.* Thus in the *Psalm, he remembered that they were but flesh,* that speaks their frailty enough, but it is added, to make the vanity of their estate the clearer, *A wind that passeth and cometh not again*[a]. *As for man his days are as grass, as a flower of the field so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more.*

This natural life is compared, (even by natural men) to the vainest things, and scarce find they things light enough to express it *vain;* and as it is here called *grass,* so they compare the generations of men to the leaves of trees. But the light of scripture doth most discover this, and it is a lesson that requires the Spirit of God to teach it aright. *Teach us* (says *Moses,* Psal. xc. 12.) *so to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom; and David,* Psal. xxxix. 4. *Make me to know my life how frail I am*[b]. And here it is called

[a] Psal. lxxviii. 39. So Psal. ciii. 15. [b] Jam. iv. 14.

grass, Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble[c]. *He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down.*

Grass hath its root in the earth, and is fed by the moisture of it for a while; but besides that, it is under the hazard of such weather as favours it not, or the scythe that cuts it down; give it all the forbearance that may be, let it be free from both those, yet how quickly will it wither of itself! set aside those many accidents, the smallest of which is able to destroy our natural life, the diseases of our own bodies, and outward violences, and casualties that cut down many in their greenness, in the flower of their youth, the utmost term is not long; in the course of nature it will wither. Our life is indeed a lighted torch, either blown out by some stroke, or some wind, or if spared, yet within a while it burns away, and will die out of itself.

And all the glory of Man.] That is elegantly added. There is indeed a great deal of seeming difference betwixt the outward condition of life amongst men; shall the rich and honourable, and beautiful and healthful go in together, under the same name, with the baser and unhappier part, the poor wretched sort of the world, that seem to be born for nothing but sufferings and miseries? At least hath the wise no advantage beyond the fools, is all grass? Make you no distinction? No, *all is grass*, or if you will have some other name, be it so, once this is true, that all flesh is grass; and if that glory that shines so much in your eyes must have a difference, then this is all it can have, it is but the flower of that same grass, somewhat above the common grass in gayness, a little comelier, and better apparrelled than it, but partaker of its frail and fading nature; hath no privilege nor immunity that way, yea of the two the less durable, and usually shorter lived; at the best it decays with it, *the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away.*

How easily and quickly hath the highest splendor

[c] Job. iv. 1, 2.

of a man's prosperity been blasted, either by men's power, or the immediate hand of God? The Spirit of the Lord blows upon it (as *Isaiah* there says) and by that, not only withers the grass, but the flower fades, though never so fair; *When thou correctest man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume like a moth*[d]. How many have the casualties of fire, or war, or shipwreck in one day or night, or a small part of either, turned out of great riches into extreme poverty? And the instances are not few of those, that have on a sudden fallen from the top of honour into the foulest disgraces, not by degrees coming down the stair they went up, but tumbled down headlong. And the most vigorous beauty, and strength of body, how doth a few days sickness, or if it escape that, a few years time blast that flower? Yea, those higher advantages that have somewhat both of truer and more lasting beauty in them, the endowments of wit and learning and eloquence, yea and of moral goodness and virtue, yet they cannot rise above this word, they are still in all their glory but the *flower of grass*, their root is in the earth. Natural ornaments are of some use in this present life, but they reach no further. When men have wasted their strength, and endured the toil of study night and day, it is but a small parcel of knowledge they can attain to, and are forced to lye down in the dust, in the midst of their pursuit of it: that head that lodges most sciences shall within a while be disfurnished of them all; and the tongue that speaks most languages, silenced.

The great projects of kings and princes, and they also themselves come under this same notion; all the vast designs that are framing in their heads fall to the ground in a moment; *they return to their dust, and in that day all their thoughts perish*[e]. *Archimedes* was killed in the midst of his demonstration.

If they themselves did consider this in the heat of

[d] Psal. xxxix. 11. [e] Psal. cxlvi. 4.

their affairs, it would much allay the swelling and loftiness of their minds; and if they that live upon their favour, would consider it, they would not value it at so high a rate, and buy it so dear as often they do. *Men of low degree are vanity*, says the Psalmist[f], but he adds, *Men of high degree are a lie.* From base mean persons we expect nothing, but the estate of great persons promises fair, and often keeps not; therefore they are a lie, although they can least endure that word.

They are in respect of mean persons as the flower to the grass; somewhat a fairer lustre they have, but no more endurance, nor exemption from decaying: thus then it is an universal and undeniable truth. It begins here with a διότι, and is as sure a conclusion as the surest of these in their best demonstrations which they call διότι. And as particular men, so whole states and kingdoms are thus; they have their budding, flourishing and withering; and it is in both, as with flowers, when they are fullest spread, then they are near their declining and withering: and thus it is with all whole generations of men upon earth, as *Solomon* says, *One goeth and another cometh*[g], but not a word of abiding at all. We in our thoughts shut up death into a very narrow compass, namely, in the moment of our expiring; but the truth is, as the moralist observes, it goes through all our life; for we are still losing, and spending it as we enjoy it, yea, our very enjoying it, is the spending it; yesterday's life is dead to day, and so shall this day's life be to-morrow. *We spend our years*, says *Moses*, *as a tale*[h], or as a thought, so swift and vanishing is it. Each word helps a tale towards its end, and while it lasts, it is generally vanity, and when it is done, it vanishes as a sound in the air. What is become of all the pompous solemnities of kings and princes at their births and marriages, coronations and triumphs? They are now as a dream; as *Luke*[i], calls all the pomp of

[f] Psal. lxii. 9. [g] Eccles. i. 4. [h] Psal. xc. 8.
[i] Acts xxv. 23.

Agrippa, Berenice, and their train, φαντασία, a mere fancy.

Hence learn the folly and pride of man that can glory and please himself in the frail and wretched being he hath here, that doats on this poor natural life, and cannot be persuaded to think on one higher, and more abiding. Although the course of times, and his daily experience tells him this truth, *that all flesh is grass;* yea, the prophet prefixes to these words a command of crying; they must be shouted aloud in our ears ere we will hear them, and by that time the sound of the cry is done, we have forgot it again. Would we consider this in the midst of those vanities that toss our light minds to and fro, it would give us wiser thoughts, and balast our hearts; make them more solid and stedfast in those spiritual endeavours, which concern a durable condition, a being that abides for ever; in comparison of which the longest term of natural life is less than a moment, and the happiest estate of it but a heap of miseries. Were all of us more constantly prosperous than any of us is, yet that one thing were enough to cry down the price we put upon this life, that it continues not. As he answered to one that had a mind to flatter him in the midst of a pompous triumph, by saying, What is wanting here? *Continuance,* said he. It was wisely said at any time, but wisest of all to have so sober a thought in such a solemnity, in which weak heads cannot escape either to be wholly drunk, or somewhat giddy at least: sure we forget this, when we grow vain upon any human glory or advantage; the colour of it pleases us, and we forget that it is but a flower, and foolishly over-esteem it; this is that madness upon flowers, that is somewhere in request, where they will give as much for one flower, as would buy a good dwelling-house. Is it not a most foolish bargain to bestow continual pains and diligence upon purchasing of great possessions or honours, if we believe this, that the best of them is no other but a short-lived flower, and neglect the purchase of those glo-

rious mansions of eternity, a garland of such flowers as withers not, an unfading crown, that everlasting life, and those everlasting pleasures that are at the right hand of God?

Now that life which shall never end must begin here, it is the new spiritual life, whereof the word of God is the immortal seed; and in opposition to corruptible seed, and the corruptible life of flesh, it is here said to endure for ever. And for this end is the frailty of natural life mentioned, that our affections may be drawn off from it to this spiritual life that is not subject unto death.

Ver. 25. *But the word of the Lord endureth for ever; and this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.*

The word of God is so like himself, and carries so plainly the image and impression of his power and wisdom, that where they are spoke of together it is sometimes doubtful, whether the expressions are to be referred to himself, or to his word[a]. And so here: but there is no hazard in referring them either way, seeing there is truth in both, and pertinency too; for they that refer them to God, affirm that they are intended for the extolling of his word, being the subject in hand, and that we may know it to be like him: but I rather think here that the Apostle speaks of the word; it is said to be quick or living (ζῶν) in the forecited text, as well as in the passage before us: and the phrase, *abiding for ever*, is expressly repeated of it here, in the prophet's words. And (with respect to those learned men that apply them to God) I remember not that this *abiding for ever* is used to express God's eternity in himself. Howsoever, this incorruptible seed is the living and everlasting word of the living and everlasting God, and is therefore such, because he, whose it is, is such.

Now this is not to be taken in an abstract sense of the word only in its own nature, but as the prin-

[a] Heb. iv. 12.

ciple of regeneration, the seed of this new life; because the word is enlivening and living, therefore they with whom it is effectual, and into whose hearts it is received, are begotten again, and made alive by it; and because the word is incorruptible, and endureth for ever, therefore that life begot by it is such too, cannot perish nor be cut down, as the natural life; no, this spiritual life of grace is the certain beginning of that eternal life of glory, and shall issue in it, and therefore hath no end.

As the word of God in itself cannot be abolished, but surpasses the endurance of Heaven and earth, as our Saviour teaches; and all the attempts of men against the divine truth of that word to undo it, are as vain, as if they should consult to pluck the sun out of the firmament; so likewise in the heart of a christian, it is immortal and incorruptible. Where it is once received by faith, it cannot be obliterated again; all the powers of darkness cannot destroy it, although they be never so diligent in their attempts that way: and this is the comfort of the Saints, that though the life which God by his word hath breathed into their souls have many and strong enemies, such as they themselves could never hold out against, yet for his own glory, and his promise sake, he will maintain that life, and bring it to its perfection: *God will perfect that which concerneth me*, saith the Psalmist[b]. It is grossly contrary to the truth of the scriptures to imagine, that they that are thus renewed can be unborn again: this new birth is but once, of one kind; though they are subject to frailties and weaknesses here in this spiritual life, yet not to death any more, nor to such way of sinning as would extinguish this life. This is that which the Apostle *John* says, *He that is born of God sinneth not;* and the reason he adds, is the same that is here given, the permanence and incorruptibleness of this word, *The seed of God abideth in him*[c].

This is the word which by the gospel is preached

[b] Psal. cxxxviii. 8. [c] 1 Joh. iii. 9.

unto you.] It is not sufficient to have these thou
of the word of God in a general way, and no
know what that word is; but we must be
suaded, that that word which is *preached to us*
this very word of so excellent virtue, and of wh
these high things are spoken, that it is *incorrup*
ble, and *abideth for ever*, and therefore surpasses
the world, and all the excellencies and glory of
Although delivered by weak men the apostles, a
by far weaker than they in the constant ministry
it, yet it loseth none of its own virtue; for that de
pends upon the first owner and author of it, th
everliving GOD, who by it begets his chosen unt
life eternal.

This therefore, is that which we should learn thus to hear, and thus to receive, esteem and love; this holy, this living word; to despise all the glittering vanities of this perishing life, all outward pomp, yea all inward worth, all wisdom and natural endowments of mind, in comparison of the heavenly light of the gospel preached unto us: Rather to hazard all than lose that, and banish all other things from that place that is due to it; to lodge it alone in our hearts, as our only treasure here, and the certain pledge of that treasure of glory laid up for us in heaven. To which blessed state may God of his infinite mercy bring us. *Amen.*

CHAP. II.

Ver. 1. *Wherefore laying aside all malice and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,*

2. *As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.*

THE same power and goodness of God that manifests itself in giving being to his creatures, appears likewise in sustaining and preserving them. To give being is the first, and to support it is the continued

effect of that power and goodness: thus it is both in the first creation, and in the second; in the first the creatures to which he gave life, he provided with convenient nourishment to uphold that life[a]: So here in the close of the former chapter, we find the doctrine of the new birth and life of a christian; and in the beginning of this, the proper food of that life; and it is the same word by which we there find it to be begotten, that is here the nourishment of it; and therefore christians are here exhorted by the apostle so to esteem, and so to use it; and that is the main scope of the words.

Obs. in general: The word, the principle and the support of our spiritual being, is both the *incorruptible seed* and the *incorruptible food* of that new life of grace, which must therefore be an incorruptible life; and this may convince us, that the ordinary thoughts even of us that hear this word, are far below the true excellency and worth of it. The stream of custom and our profession bring us hither, and we sit out our hour under the sound of this word; but how few consider and prize it, as the great ordinance of God, for the salvation of souls, the beginner and the sustainer of the divine life of grace within us; and certainly until we have these thoughts of it, and seek to feel it thus ourselves, although we hear it most frequently and slip no occasion, yea, hear it with attention and some present delight, yet still we miss the right use of it, and turn it from its true end, while we take it not as *that ingrafted word which is able to save our souls*[b].

Thus ought they that preach to speak it, to endeavour their utmost to accommodate it to this end, that sinners may be converted, begotten again, and believers nourished and strengthened in their spiritual life, to regard no lower end, but aim steadily at that mark. Their hearts and tongues ought to be set on fire with holy zeal for God, and love to souls, kindled by the Holy Ghost, that came down on the apostles in the shape of fiery tongues.

[a] Gen. i. 11. [b] Jam. i. 21.

And they that hear, should remember this as the end of their hearing, that they may receive spiritual life and strength by the word; for though it seems a poor despicable business, that a frail sinful man like yourselves, speak a few words in your hearing; yet look upon it as the way wherein God communicates happiness to them that believe, and works that believing unto happiness, alters the whole frame of the soul, and makes a new creation, as it begets it again to the inheritance of glory: consider it thus, which is its true notion, and then what can be so precious? Let the world disesteem it as they will, know ye, that *it is the power of God unto salvation. The preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto them that are saved, it is the power of God*, says the apostle[c]. And if you would have the experience of this, if you would have life and growth by it, you must look above the poor worthless messenger, and call in his almighty help, who is the Lord of life. As the *philosophers* affirm, that if the heavens should stand still, there would be no generation, nor flourishing of any thing here below; it is the moving and influence of the Spirit that makes the church fruitful. Happy would it be if you would be persuaded to do this before you come hither: present the blindness of your minds, and the deadness of your hearts to God, and say, "Lord, "here is an opportunity for thee to shew the power "of thy word. I would find life and strength in it; "but neither can I that hear, nor he that speaks, "make it thus unto me; that is thy prerogative; say "thou the word, and it shall be done." *God said, let there be light and it was light*[d].

In this exhortation to the due use of the word, the apostle continues the resemblance of that new birth he mentioned[c].

As new born babes.] Be not satisfied with yourselves till you find some evidence of this new, this supernatural life. There be delights and comforts in this life, in its lowest condition that would per-

[c] 1 Cor. i. 18. [d] Gen. i. 3. [c] Chap. i.

suade us to look after it, if we knew them; but as the most cannot be made sensible of these, consider therefore the end of it Better never to have been, than not to have been partaker of this new being. *Except a man be born again*, says our Saviour, *he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*[f]. Surely they that are not born again, shall one day wish they had never been born. What a poor wretched thing is the life that we have here! a very heap of follies and miseries; now if we would share in a happier being after it, that life that ends not, it must begin here; grace and glory is one and the same life, only with this difference, that the one is the beginning, and the other the perfection of it; or if we do call them two several lives, yet the one is the undoubted pledge of the other. It was a strange word for a heathen to say, that that day of death we fear so, *æterni natalis est, is the birth-day of eternity.* Thus it is indeed to those that are here born again; this new birth of grace is the sure earnest and pledge of that birth-day of glory. Why do we not then labour to make this certain by the former? Is it not a fearful thing to spend our days in vanity, and then lie down in darkness and sorrow for ever; to disregard the life of our soul, while we may and should be provident for it, and then when its going out, cry, *Quò nunc abibis?* Whither art thou going, O my soul?

But this new life puts us out of the danger and fear of that eternal death: *We are passed from death to life*, says St. *John*[g], speaking of those that are born again; and being passed, there is no repassing; no going back from this life to death again.

This new birth is the same that St. *John* calls the *first resurrection*, and pronounces them blessed that partake of it, *Blessed are they that have part in the first resurrection, the second death shall have no power over them*[h].

The weak beginnings of grace in comparison of

[f] Joh. iii. 3. [g] 1 Joh. iii. 14. [h] Rev. xx. 6.

further strength attainable even in this life, are sometimes expressed as the infancy of it; and so believers ought not to continue infants, and if they do, it is reprovable in them, as we see[i]. Though the Apostle writes to new converts, and so may possiby imply the tenderness of their beginnings of grace, yet I conceive that infancy is here taken in such a sense as agrees to a christian in the whole course, and best estate of his spiritual life here below; and so likewise the *milk* here recommended is answerable to this sense of infancy, and not to the former; as it is in some of those cited places, where it means the easiest and first principles of religion, and so is opposed to the higher mysteries of it, as to strong meat; but here it signifies the whole word of God, and all its wholesome and saving truths, as the proper nourishment of the children of God: And so the Apostle's words are a standing exhortation for all christians of all degrees.

And the whole estate and course of their spiritual life here, is called their *infancy*, not only as opposed to the corruption and wickedness of the old man, but likewise as signifying the weakness, and imperfection of it, at its best in this life, compared with the perfection of the life to come; for the weakest beginnings of grace are by no means so far below the highest degree of it possible in this life, as that highest degree falls short of the state of glory; so that, if one measure of grace is called infancy in respect of another, much more is all grace infancy in respect of glory. And sure as for duration, the time of our present life is far less to eternity than the time of our natural infancy is to the rest of our life; so that we may be still called but *new or lately born*. Our best pace and strongest walking in obedience here, is but as the stepping of children when they begin to go by hold, in comparison of the perfect obedience in glory, when *we shall follow the Lamb wheresoever he goes*[k]. All our knowledge

[i] Eph. iv. 14. 1 Cor. ii. 2. 1 Cor. xiv. 20. Heb. v. 12.
[k] Rev. xiv. 4.

here, is but the ignorance of infants, and all our expressions of God, and of his praises, but as the first stammerings of children, in comparison of the knowledge we shall have of him hereafter, when *we shall know as we are known*[l], and of these praises we shall then offer him, when that new song shall be taught us. A child hath in it a reasonable soul, and yet by the indisposedness of the body, and abundance of moisture, it is so bound up, that its difference from the beasts and partaking of a rational life is not so apparent, as afterwards; and thus the spiritual life that is from above infused into a christian, though it doth act and work in some degree, yet it is so clogged with natural corruption still remaining in him, that the excellency of it is much clouded and obscured; but in the life to come, it shall have nothing at all incumbring and indisposing it. And this is the Apostle St. *Paul's* doctrine[m].

And this is the wonder of divine grace, that brings so small beginnings to that height of perfection that we are not able to conceive of; that a little spark of true grace, that is not only indiscernible to others, but often to a christian himself, yet should be the beginning of that condition, wherein they shall shine brighter than the sun in the firmament. The difference is great in our natural life; in some persons especially, that they that in infancy were so feeble, and wrapt up as others in swaddling cloaths, yet afterwards come to excel in wisdom and in the knowledge of sciences, or to be commanders of great armies, or to be kings: but the distance is far greater and more admirable betwixt the weakness of these *new-born babes*, the small beginnings of grace, and our after perfection, that fulness of knowledge that we look for, and that crown of immortality that all they are born to, that *are born of God.*

But as in the faces or actions of some children, characters and presages of their after greatness have

[l] 1 Cor. xiii, 9—12. [m] 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10, 11, 12.

appeared, as a singular beauty in *Moses*'s face, as they write of him, and as *Cyrus* was made king among the shepherds children with whom he was brought up, &c. so also certainly in these children of God there be some characters and evidences that they are born for Heaven by their new birth. That holiness and meekness, that patience and faith that shine in the actions and sufferings of the saints, are characters of their father's image, and shew their high original, and foretel their glory to come; such a glory as doth not only surpass the world's thoughts, but the thoughts of the children of God themselves[n].

Now that the children of God may grow by the word of God, the Apostle requires these two things of them: 1. The innocency of children: 2. The appetite of children. For this, as I conceive, is relative not only to the desiring *the milk of the word*, but to the former verse, the *putting off malice;* as the Apostle *Paul* exhorts[o], *as concerning malice, be ye children.*

1*st*. The *innocency* of children is required, *Wherefore laying aside*, &c. This imports that we are naturally prepossessed with these evils, and therefore are exhorted to put them off. Our hearts are by nature no other but cages of those unclean birds, malice, envy, hypocrisy, &c. The Apostles sometimes name some of these evils, and sometimes other of them; but they are inseparable, all one garment, and all comprehended under that one word[p], *the old man*, which the Apostle there exhorts to put off; and here it is pressed as a necessary evidence of their new birth, and furtherance of their spiritual growth, that these base habits be thrown away; ragged filthy habits, unbeseeming the children of God; they are the proper marks of an unrenewed mind, the very characters of the children of satan, for they are his image. He hath his names from enmity, and envy, and slandering, and he is that

[n] 1 Joh. iii. 2. [o] 1 Cor. xiv. 20. [p] Eph. iv. 22.

grand hypocrite and deceiver that can *transform himself into an angel of light*[q].

So on the contrary, the Spirit of God that dwells in his children is the spirit of meekness, and love, and truth. That dove-like spirit that descended on our Saviour, is from him communicated to believers. It is the grossest impudence to pretend to be christians, and yet to entertain hatred and envyings upon whatsoever occasion; for there is nothing more recommended to them by our Saviour's own doctrine, and more imprest upon their hearts by his Spirit, than love. Κακία may be taken generally, but I conceive it is that which we particularly call *malice.*

Malice and envy are but two branches growing out of the same bitter root; self-love and evil-speakings are the fruit they bear. Malice is properly the procuring or wishing another's evil; envy the repining at their good, and these vent themselves by evil-speaking. This infernal fire within, smokes and flashes out by the tongue, which, St. *James* says, *is set on fire of hell,* iii. 6. and fires all about it; censuring the actions of those they hate or envy, aggravating their failings, and detracting from their virtues, taking all things by the left ear; for (as *Epictetus* says) *Every thing hath two handles.* The art of taking things by the better side, which charity always doth, would save much of those janglings and heart-burnings that so abound in the world. But folly and perverseness possess the hearts of the most, and therefore their discourses are usually the vent of those; *For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth must speak*[r]. The unsavoury breaths of men argue their inward corruption. Where shall a man come, almost, in societies, but his ears shall be beaten with the unpleasant noise (sure it is so to a christian mind) of one detracting and disparaging another: and yet this is extreme baseness, and the practice only of false counterfeit goodness, to make up our own esteem out of

[q] 2 Cor. xi. 14. [r] Matth. xii. 34.

the ruins of the good name of others; real virtue neither needs nor can endure that dishonest shift: it can subsist of itself, and therefore ingenuously commends and acknowledges what good is in others, and loves to hear it acknowledged; and neither readily speaks nor hears evil of any, but rather, where duty and conscience require not discovery, casts a vail upon men's failings to hide them; this is the true temper of the children of God.

These evils of *malice* and *envy*, and *evil-speakings*, and such like, are not to be dissembled by us in ourselves, and conveyed under better appearances, but to be cast away, not to be covered, but put off; and therefore that which is the upper garment and cloak of all other evils, the Apostle here commands to cast that off too, namely, *hypocrisy*.

What avails it to wear this mask? A man may indeed in the sight of men act his part handsomely under it, and pass so for a time; but know we not that there is an eye that sees through it, and a hand, that if we will not put off this mask, will pull it off to our shame, either here in the sight of men, or if we should escape all our life, and go fair off the stage under it, yet that there is a day appointed wherein all hypocrites shall be unvailed, and appear what they are indeed before men and angels? It is a poor thing to be approved and applauded by men, while God condemns, to whose sentence all men must stand or fall. Oh! seek to be approved and justified by him, and then *who shall condemn*[s]? It is no matter who do. How easily may we bear the mistakes and dislikes of all the world, if he declare himself well pleased with us; *It is a small thing for me to be judged of man, or man's day; he that judgeth me is the Lord*, saith the Apostle[t].

But these evils are here particularly to be put off, as contrary to the right and profitable receiving of the word of God; for this part of the exhortation

[s] Rom. viii. 34. [t] 1 Cor. iv. 3.

[*Laying aside*] looks to that which follows, [*Desire*] and is specially so to be considered.

There is this double task in religion. When a man enters to it, he is not only to be taught true wisdom, but he is withal, yea, first of all, to be untaught the errors and wickedness that are deep rooted in his mind, which he hath not only learned by the corrupt conversation of the world, but brought the seeds of them into the world with him. They do indeed improve and grow by the favour of that example that is round about a man; but they are originally in our nature as it is now; they are connatural to us, besides continual custom, which is another nature. There is none comes to the school of Christ suiting the philosopher's word, *ut tabula rasa*, as blank paper, to receive his doctrine; but, on the contrary, all scribbled and blurred with such base habits as these, *malice*, *hypocrisy*, *envy*, &c.

Therefore the first work is to raze out these, to cleanse and purify the heart from these blots, these foul characters, that it may receive the impression of the image of God. And because it is the word of God that both begins and advances this work, and perfects the lineaments of that divine image on the soul; therefore to the receiving this word aright, and this proper effect by it, the conforming of the soul to Jesus Christ, which is the true growth of the spiritual life, this is prerequired, that the hearts of them that hear it be purged of these and such like impurities, *malice*, *hypocrisy*, &c.

These are so opposite to the profitable receiving of the word of God, that while they possess and rule the soul, it cannot at all embrace these divine truths; while it is filled with such guests, there is no room to entertain the word.

They cannot dwell together by reason of their contrary nature, the word will not mix with these. The saving mixture of the word of God in the soul, is that the Apostle speaks of, and he gives the want of it as the cause of unprofitable hear-

ing the word[u], *not mixing of it with faith;* for by that the word is concocted into the nourishment of the life of grace, united to the soul, and mixed with it, by being mixed with faith, as the Apostle's expression imports: that is the proper mixture it requires, but with these qualities here mentioned it will not mix; there is a natural antipathy betwixt them, as strong as in those things in nature, that cannot be brought by any means to agree and mingle together.

Can there be any thing more contrary than the *good word of God*, as the Apostle calls it, and those *evil-speakings?* Than the word that is of such excellent sweetness, and the bitter words of a malignant tongue? Than the word of life, and words *full of deadly poison?* For so slanders and defamings of our brethren are. And is not all *malice* and *envy* most opposite to the word, that is the message of *peace* and *love?* How can the gall of *malice* and this *milk* of the word agree? Hypocrisy and guile stand in direct opposition to the name of this word that is called the *word of truth;* and here the very words shew this contrariety, *sincere milk* and a *double unsincere mind.*

These two are necessary conditions of good nourishment; 1*st*, That the food be good and wholesome, 2*dly*, That the inward constitution of them that use it be so too. And if this fail, the other profits not. This sincere milk is the only proper nourishment of spiritual life, and there is no defect nor undue quality in it; but the greatest part of hearers are inwardly unwholesome, diseased with the evils here mentioned, and others of the like nature; and therefore, either have no kind of appetite to the word at all, but rather feed upon such trash as suits with their distemper, as some kind of diseases incline those that have them to eat coals or lime, &c. or if they be anyways desirous to hear the word, and seem to feed on it, yet the noxious humours that abound in them make it altogether unprofitable,

[u] Heb. iv. 2.

and they are not nourished by it. As this evil of malice and envying, so ordinary among men, and (which is most strange amongst christians) like an overflowing of the gall, possesses their whole minds; so that they not only fail of being nourished by the word they hear, but are the worse by it, their disease is fed by it, as an unwholesome stomach turns the best meat it receives into that bad humour that abounds in it. Do not they thus that observe what the word says, that they may be the better enabled to discover the failings of others, and speak maliciously and uncharitably of them, and vent themselves, as is too common, *This word met well with such a one's fault, and this with another's?* Is not this to feed these diseases of *malice, envy* and *evil speakings* with this *pure milk*, and make them grow, instead of growing by it ourselves in grace and holiness.

Thus likewise the hypocrite turns all that he hears of this word, not to the inward renovation of his mind, and redressing what is amiss there, but only to the composing of his outward carriage, and to enable himself to act his part better; to be cunninger in his own faculty, a more refined and expert hypocrite, not to grow more a christian indeed, but more such in appearance only, and in the opinion of others.

Therefore it is a very needful advertisement, seeing these evils are so natural to men, and so contrary to the nature of the word of God, that they be purged out, to the end it may be profitably received. A very like exhortation to this hath the Apostle St. *James*, and some of the same words, but in another metaphor[x], *Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word.* He compares the word to a plant of excellent virtue, the very tree of life, the word that is able to save your souls: but the only soil wherein it will grow is a heart full of meekness, a heart that is purged of those luxuriant

[x] Ja. i. 21.

weeds that grow so rank in it by nature; they must be plucked up and thrown out to make place for this word.

And there is such a necessity of this, that the most approved teachers of wisdom, in a human way, have required this of their scholars, that to the end their minds might be capable of it, they should be purified from vice and wickedness; for this reason the philosopher judges young men unfit hearers of moral philosophy, because of the abounding and untamedness of their passions, granting, that if those were composed and ordered, that they might be admitted. And it was *Socrates*'s custom, when any asked him a question to be informed by him, before he would answer them, he asked them concerning their own qualities and course of life.

Now, if men require a calm and purified disposition of mind to make it capable of their doctrine, how much more is it suitable and necessary for learning the doctrine of God, and those deep mysteries that his word opens up. It is well expressed in that Apocryphal book of wisdom, *That froward thoughts separate from God, and wisdom enters not into a malicious soul:* no indeed, that is a very unfit dwelling for it; and even a Heathen could say, *The mind that is impure is not capable of God, and divine things*, Seneca. Therefore we see the strain of that book of *Proverbs* that speaks so much of this wisdom, it requires in the first chapter, that they that would hear it, do retire themselves from all ungodly customs and practices. And indeed how can the soul apprehend spiritual things, that is not in some measure refined from the love of sin, that abuses and bemires the minds of men, and makes them unable to arise to heavenly thoughts? *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*, says our Saviour[y], not only shall they see him perfectly hereafter, but, as they can receive him, he will impart and make himself known unto them here[z]. *If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Fa-*

[y] Matth. v. 8. [z] Joh. xiv. 23.

ther will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. This is that which makes the word obscure, namely, the filthy mists within; whereas, on the contrary, he will in just judgment hide himself, and the saving truth of his word, from those that entertain and delight in sin: the very sins wherein they delight shall obscure and darken the light of the gospel to them, that though it shine clear as the sun at noon-day, they shall be as those that live in a dungeon, they shall not discern it.

And as they receive no benefit by the word that have these evils here mentioned reigning and in full strength in them, so they that are indeed born again, the more they retain of these, the less shall they find the influence and profit of the word; for this exhortation concerns them. They may possibly some of them have a great remainder of these corruptions unmortified, therefore are they exhorted to lay aside entirely those evils, *all malice, all hypocrisy*, &c. else, though they hear the word often, yet they will be in a spiritual atrophy, they will eat much, but grow nothing by it, they will find no increase of grace and spiritual strength.

Would we know the main cause of our fruitless hearing of the word, here it is; men bring not meek and guileless spirits to it, not minds emptied and purified to receive it, but stuffed with *malice*, and *hypocrisy*, and *pride*, and other such evils: and where should the word enter, when all is so taken up? And if it did enter, how should it prosper amongst so many enemies, or at all abide amongst them? Either they will turn it out again, or choak and kill the power of it. We think religion and our own lusts, and secret heart-idols, should agree together, because we would have it so; but this is not possible, therefore labour to entertain the word of truth in the love of it, and lodge the mystery of faith *in a pure conscience*, as the Apostle St. *Paul* speaks,[a] Join those together with *David*[b], *I hate vain*

[a] 1 Tim. iii. 9. [b] Psal. cxix. 113.

thoughts, but thy law do I love. And as here our Apostle, *Lay aside all malice, and hypocrisy, and envy, and evil-speakings,* and so receive the word, or else look for no benefit by it here, nor for salvation by it hereafter; but be prevailed upon to cast out all impurity, and give your whole heart to it, so to desire it, that *you may grow,* and then as you desire, *you shall grow by it.*

2*dly,* The Apostle speaks of the *appetite* of children, *Desire the sincere milk,* &c. Every real believer hath received a life from Heaven, far more excelling our natural life, than that excels the life of the beasts. And this life hath its own peculiar desires and delights, that are the proper actings and the certain characters and evidence of it: amongst others, this is one, and a main one, answerable to the like desire in natural life, namely, a desire of food; and because it is here still imperfect, therefore the natural end of this is not only nourishment, but growth, as it is here expressed.

The sincere milk of the word.] The life of grace is the proper life of a reasonable soul, and without it, the soul is dead, as the body is without the soul: so that this may be truly rendered, *reasonable milk,* as some read it, but certainly that reasonable milk is the word of God, *The milk of the word.*

It was before called *the immortal seed,* and here it is *the milk* of those that are born again, and thus it is very agreeable nourishment to that spiritual life, according to their saying, *Iisdem alimur ex quibus constamus.* As the milk that infants draw from the breast, is most connatural food to them, being of that same substance that nourished them in the womb: So when they are brought forth, that food follows them as it were for their supply in that way that is provided in nature for it; by certain veins it ascends into the breasts, and is there fitted for them, and they are by nature directed to find it there. Thus as a christian begins to live by the power of the word, he is by the nature of that spiritual life di-

rected to that same word as its nourishment. To follow the resemblance further in the qualities of milk after the monkish way, that runs itself out of breath in allegory, I conceive, is neither solid nor profitable, and to speak freely, the curious searching of the similitude in other qualities of milk, seems to wrong the quality here given it by the Apostle, in which it is so well resembled by milk, namely, the simple pureness and sincerity of the word; besides that the pressing of comparisons of this kind too far, proves often so constrained ere they have done with it, that by too much drawing, they bring forth blood instead of milk.

Pure and unmixed, as milk drawn immediately from the breast; the pure word of God without the mixture not only of error, but of all other composition of vain unprofitable subtilties, or affected human eloquence, such as become not the majesty and gravity of God's word. *If any man speak,* says our Apostle, *let him speak as the oracles of God*[c]. Light conceits and flowers of rhetoric, wrong the word more than they can please the hearers; the weeds among the corn make it look gay, but it were all the better they were not amongst it. Nor can those mixtures be pleasing to any but carnal minds. They that are indeed the children of God (as infants who like their breast-milk best pure) do love the word best so, and wheresoever they find it so, they relish it well; whereas natural men cannot love spiritual things for themselves, desire not the word for its own sweetness, but would have it sauced with such conceits as possibly spoil the simplicity of it; or at the best love to hear it for the wit, and learning, which without any wrongful mixture of it, they find in one delivering it more than another; but the natural and genuine appetite of the children of God, is to the word, for itself; and only as milk, *sincere milk:* And where they find it so, from whomsoever, or in what way soever delivered unto them, they feed upon it with delight: before

[c] 1 Pet. iv. 11.

conversion, wit or eloquence may draw a man to the word, and possibly prove a happy bait to catch him, as St. *Augustine* reports of his hearing St. *Ambrose*; but when once he is born again, then it is the milk itself, he desires for itself.

Desire the sincere milk.] Not only hear it because it is your custom, but desire it because it is your food, and it is, 1. A *natural* desire (as the infant's of milk) not upon any external respect or inducement, but from an inward principle and bent of nature; and because natural, therefore, 2. *Earnest*, not a cold indifferent willing, that cares not whether it obtain or no, but a vehement desire, as the word signifies, and the resemblance clearly bears: as a child that will not be stilled till it have the breast; offer it what you will, silver, gold, or jewels, it regards them not, these answer not its desire, and that must be answered. Thus *David*[d], *My soul breaketh for the longing it hath to thy judgments*; as a child like to break its heart with crying for want of the breast: and again, because natural, it is, 3. *Constant*: the infant is not cloyed nor wearied with daily feeding on the breast, but desires it every day, as if it had never had it before; thus the child of God hath an unchangeable appetite for the word, it is daily new to him, he finds still fresh delight in it; thus *David* as before cited, *My soul breaketh for the longing it hath for thy judgments at all times*. And then[e] this law was *his meditation day and night*. Whereas a natural man is easily surfeited of it, and the very commonness and cheapness of it makes it contemptible to him. And this is our case; that wherein we should wonder at God's singular goodness to us, and therefore prize his word the more, that very thing makes us despise it: whereas others our brethren, have bought this milk with their own blood, we have it upon the easiest terms that can be wished, only for the desiring, without the hazard of bleeding for it, and scarce need we to be at the pains of sweating for it.

[d] Psal. cxix. 20. [e] Psal. i.

That ye may grow thereby.] This is not only the end for which God hath provided his children with the word, and moves them to desire it; but which they are to intend in their desire and use of it, and, answerable to God's purpose, they are therefore to desire it, because it is proper for this end, and that by it they may attain this end, *to grow thereby.* And herein indeed these children differ from infants in the natural life, that are directed to their food beside their knowledge, and without intention of its end; but this *rational milk* is to be desired by the children of God in a rational way, knowing and intending its end, having the use of natural reason renewed, and sanctified by supernatural grace.

Now the end of this desire is growth. Desire the word, not that you may only hear it; that is to fall very far short of its true end; yea, it is to take the beginning of the work for the end of it: the ear is indeed the mouth of the mind, by which it receives the word, as *Elihu* compares it[f], but meat that goes no further than the mouth (you know) cannot nourish. Neither ought this desire of the word to be only to satisfy a custom; it were an exceeding folly to make so superficial a thing the end of so serious a work. Again, to hear it only to stop the mouth of conscience, that it may not clamour more for the gross impiety of contemning it; this is not to hear it out of desire, but out of fear: to desire it only for some present pleasure and delight that a man may find in it, is not the due use and end of it; that there is delight in it, may help to commend it to those that find it so, and so be a mean to advance the end; but the end it is not. To seek no more but a present delight that vanisheth with the sound of the words, that die in the air, is not to desire the word as meat, but as musick, as God tells the prophet *Ezekiel* of his people[g]. *And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well upon an in-*

[f] Job xxxiv. 2. [g] Ezek. xxxiii. 32.

strument; for they hear thȳ words, and they do them not. To desire the word for the increase of knowledge (although this is necessary and commendable, and being rightly qualified, is a part of spiritual accretion) yet take it as going no further, it is not the true end of the word; nor the venting of that knowledge in speech and frequent discourse of the word and the divine truths that are in it; which, where it is governed with christian prudence, is not to be despised, but commended: yet certainly the highest knowledge, and the most frequent and skilful speaking of the word, severed from the growth here mentioned, misses the true end of the word. If any one's head or tongue should grow apace, and all the rest stand at a stay, it would certainly make him a monster; and they are no other, that are knowing and discoursing christians, and grow daily in that, but not at all in holiness of heart and life, which is the proper growth of the children of God. Apposite to their case is *Epictetus's* comparison of the sheep, they return not what they eat in grass, but in wool. *David* in that cxix. Psalm, that is wholly spent upon this subject, the excellency and use of the word of God, expresseth[h] his delight in it, his earnest desire to be further taught, and to know more of it; his readiness to speak of it[i]. But withal, you know he joins his desire and care *to keep it, to hide it in his heart,* &c[k]. To make it *the man of his counsel,* to be as the whole assembly of his privy counsellors, and to be ruled and guided by it; and with him, to use it so, is indeed to grow by it.

If we know what this spiritual life is, and wherein the nature of it consists, we may easily know what is the growth of it. When holiness increases, when the sanctifying graces of the Spirit grow stronger in the soul, and consequently act more strongly in the life of a christian, then he grows spiritually.

[h] v. 15. 16. 24. [i] v. 13. 27. [k] Psal. cxix. v. 5, 11.

And as the word is the mean of begetting this spiritual life, so likewise of its increase.

1. If we consider, the nature of the word in general, that it is spiritual and divine, treats of the highest things, and therefore hath in it a fitness to elevate men's minds from the earth, and to assimilate to itself such as are often conversant with it, as all kind of doctrine readily doth to those that are much in it, and apply their minds to study it. Doubtless such kind of things as are frequent with men, have an influence into the disposition of their souls. The Gospel is called *light*, and the children of God are likewise called *light*, as being transformed into its nature, and thus they are still the more, by more hearing of it, and so they grow.

2. If we look more particularly unto the strain and tenor of the word, it is most fit for increasing the graces of the Spirit in a christian; for there be in it particular truths relative to them, that are apt to excite them, and set them on work, and so to make them grow, as all habits do, by acting; it doth (as the Apostle's word may be translated) *stir up the sparks*, and blow them into a greater flame, make them burn clearer and hotter. This it doth both by particular exhortation to the study and exercise of those graces, sometimes pressing one, and sometimes another; and by right representing to them their objects. The word feeds faith, by setting before it the free grace of God, his rich promises, and his power and truth to perform them all; shews it the strength of the new covenant, not depending upon it, but holding in Christ, in whom all the promises of God are *yea* and *amen;* and drawing faith still to rest more entirely upon his *righteousness.* It feeds repentance, by making the vileness and deformity of sin daily more clear and visible; still as more of the word hath admission into the soul, the more it hates sin, being the more discovered, and the better known in its own native colour. As the more light is in a house, the more any thing in it that is uncleanly or deformed is seen and disliked.

Likewise it increaseth love to God, by opening up still more and more of his infinite excellency and loveliness: and as it borrows the resemblance of the vilest things in nature to express the foulness and hatefulness of sin; so all the beauties and dignities that are in all the creatures are called together in the word, to give us some small scantling of that uncreated beauty, that alone deserves to be loved. Thus might instances be given in all other graces.

But above all other considerations, in this it is observeable, that the word is the increaser of grace, in that it holds forth Jesus Christ to our view to look upon, not only as the perfect pattern, but as the full fountain of all grace, from whose fulness we all receive. The contemplating of him, as the perfect image of God, and then drawing from him as having in himself a treasure for us, these give the soul more of that image, which is truly spiritual growth. This the Apostle expresseth excellently[l], speaking of the ministry of the gospel, revealing Christ, that *beholding in him*, as it is[m], *In his face the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.* Not only that we may take the copy of his graces, but have a share of them.

There be many things might be said of this spiritual growth, but I will add only a few; 1. In the judging of this growth, some conclude too rigidly against themselves, that they grow not by the word, because it is not sensible to them as they desire.

But 1. This is known in all things that grow, that it is not discerned in *motu, sed in termino*, not in the growing, but when they are grown. 2. Besides, other things are to be considered in this, although other graces seem not to advance, yet if thou growest more self-denying, and humble in the sense of thy slowness, all is not lost; although the branches shoot not up so fast as thou wishest, yet if the root grow deeper, and fasten more, it is an useful

[l] 2 Cor. iii. ult. [m] Chap. iv. v. 6.

growth; he that is still learning to be more in Jesus Christ, and less in himself, to have all his dependence and comfort in him, is doubtless a growing believer.

2. On the other side, a far greater number conclude wrong in their own favour, imagining that they do grow, if they gain in some of those things we mentioned above, namely, more knowledge and more faculty of discoursing; if they find often some present stirrings of joy or sorrow in hearing of the word, if they reform their life, grow more civil and blameless, *&c.* Yet all these and many such things may be in a natural man, who notwithstanding grows not, for that is impossible; he is not in that state a subject capable of this growth; for he is dead, he hath none of this new life to which this growth relates. *Herod heard gladly, and obeyed many things*[n].

Consider, then, what true delight we might have in this. You find a pleasure, when you see your children grow, when they begin to stand and walk, *&c.* You love well to perceive your estate or your honour grow, but for the soul to be growing liker God, and nearer Heaven, (if we know it) is a pleasure far beyond them all. To find pride, earthliness and vanity abating, and faith, love and spiritual mindedness increasing, especially if we reflect that this growth is not as our natural life, that is often cut off before it attain full age as we call it; and if it attain that, falls again to move downwards and decays, as the sun, being at its meridian, begins to decline again: but this life shall grow on in whomsoever it is, and come certainly to its fulness; after which there is no more need of this word, either for growth or nourishment; no death, no decay, no old age; but perpetual youth, and a perpetual spring, *ver æternum, fulness of joy in the presence of God, and everlasting pleasures at his right hand*[o].

[n] Mark vi. 20. [o] Psal. xvi. ult.

Ver. 3. *If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*

OUR natural desire of food arises principally from its necessity, for that end which nature seeks, the growth, or at least the nourishment of our bodies; but besides, there is a present sweetness and pleasantness in the use of it, that serves to sharpen our desire, and is placed in nature for that purpose: thus the children of God, in their spiritual life, are naturally carried to desire the means of their nourishment, and of their growth, being always here in a growing state; but withal, there is a spiritual delight and sweetness in that word, in that which it reveals concerning God, and that adds to their desire, stirs their appetite towards it; the former is in the foregoing verse, the latter in this. Nature addresses the infant to the breast, but when it hath once tasted of it, that is a new superadded attractive, and makes it desire after that the more earnestly. So here,

The word is fully recommended to us by these two, usefulness and pleasantness, like milk (as it is compared here) which is a nourishing food, and withal sweet and delightful to the taste; by it we grow, and in it we taste the graciousness of God. *David* in that psalm that he dedicates wholly to this subject, gives both these as the reason of his appetite; his love to it he expresses pathetically [p], *O how love I thy law?* And then he adds, that by it *he was made wiser than his enemies, than his teachers,* and *than the ancients;* taught to refrain from every evil way, taught by the Author of that word, the Lord himself; thou hast taught me to grow wiser and warier, and holier in thy ways; and then, *v.* 103, he adds this other reason, *How sweet are thy words unto my taste, yea sweeter than the honey and the honey comb.*

We shall speak, 1. of the goodness or graciousness of the Lord; 2. Of this taste; And, 3. Of the inference from both.

[p] Psal. cxix. 97.

1. We may consider the goodness of God. He is said to be *gracious*, or of a bountiful kind disposition. The word[q], whence this is taken, is *tob*, which signifies, *good*. The *Greek* translators there render it by the word used here by our Apostle; both the words signify a benignity and kindness of nature; it is one of love's attributes[r], χρηστεύεται, it is kind, ever compassionate, and ready as it can to be helpful in straits and distresses, to forget and pass by evil, and to do good; and in the largest and most comprehensive sense must we take it here, and yet still speak and think infinitely below what his goodness is. He is naturally good, yea goodness is his nature; he is goodness and love itself; *he that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love*[s]. Primitively good, all goodness is derived from him, and all that is in the creature comes forth from no other but that ocean; and this graciousness is still larger than them all.

There is a common bounty of God, wherein he doth good to all, and so *the whole earth is full of his goodness*[t]. But the goodness that the gospel is full of, the particular stream that runs in that channel, is his peculiar graciousness and love to his own children; that, by which they are first enlivened and then refreshed, and sustained in their spiritual being. It is this that is here spoken of; he is gracious to them in freely forgiving their sins, and giving no less than himself unto them; he frees them from all evils, and fills them with all good[u]. *He satisfies thy mouth*, and so it follows with good reason, v. 8. that he is *merciful and gracious*, and his graciousness is there further expressed in his gentleness, and *slowness to anger*, bearing with the frailties of his own, *and pitying them as a father pitieth his children*, v. 8. 13. and 14.

No friend is so kind and friendly (as this word signifies) and none so powerful; a present help in trouble, ready to be found; whereas others may be

[q] Ps. xxxiv. 8. [r] 1 Cor. xiii. 4. [s] 1 John, iv. 8.
[t] Psal. xxxiii. 5. [u] Psalm ciii. 3, 4, 5.

far off, he is always at hand, and his presence is always comfortable.

They that know God, still find him a real useful good. Some things and persons are useful at one time, and others at another, but God at all times. A well furnished table may please a man, while he hath health and appetite; but offer it to him in the height of a fever, how unpleasant would it be then? though never so richly decked, it is not only then useless, but hateful to him: but the kindness and love of God is then as seasonable and refreshing to him, as in health, and possibly more; he can find sweetness in that, even on his sick bed. The bitter choler abounding in the mouth, in a fever, doth not disrelish his sweetness; it transcends and goes above it. Thus all earthly enjoyments, have but some time (as meats) when they are in season; but the graciousness of God is always sweet, the taste of that is never out of season. See how old age spoils the relish of outward delights, in the example of *Barzillai*[x]. But it makes not this distasteful; therefore the psalmist prays, that when other comforts forsake him, and wear out, when they ebb from him, and leave him on the sand, this may not; that still he may feed on the goodness of God[y], *Cast me not off in old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth.* It is the continual influence of his graciousness that makes them still grow like *cedars* in *Lebanon*[z], *To bring forth fruit in old age, to be still fat and flourishing, to shew that the Lord is upright,* as is there added; that he is (as the word imports) *still like himself,* and his goodness ever the same.

Full chests, or large possessions, may seem sweet to a man, till death present itself; but then, as the Prophet speaks of *throwing away their idols of silver and gold to the bats and moles, in the day of calamity*[a], then he is forced to throw all he possesses away with disdain of it, and his former folly in

[x] 2 Sam. xix. 35. [y] Psal. lxxi. 9. [z] Psal. xcii. 14. 15.
[a] Isa. ii. 20.

doating on it; then the kindness of friends, and wife and children, can do nothing but increase his grief and their own: but then indeed is the love of God the good and abiding sweetness. And it best relisheth when all other things are most unsavoury and uncomfortable. God is gracious, but it is God in Christ, otherwise we cannot find him so; therefore this is here spoken in particular of Jesus Christ (as it appears by that which followeth) through whom all the peculiar kindness and love of God is conveyed to the soul, and can come no other way; and the word here mentioned is the gospel[b], whereof Christ is the subject. Though God is mercy and goodness in himself; yet we cannot find nor apprehend him so to us, but only looking through that *medium*, the Mediator.

That main point of the goodness of God in the gospel, that is so sweet to a humbled sinner, the forgiveness of sins, we know we cannot taste of, but in Christ[c], *In whom we have redemption.* And all the favour that shines on us, all the *grace we receive is of his fulness*, all our acceptance with God, taking into grace and kindness again, is in him, v. 6, *He made us accepted in the beloved.* His grace appears in both, as it is there expressed, but it is all in Christ. Let us therefore never leave him out in our desires of tasting the graciousness and love of God: for otherwise, we shall but dishonour him, and disappoint ourselves.

The free grace of God was given to be tasted in the promises, before the coming of Christ in the flesh; but being accomplished in his coming, then was the sweetness of grace made more sensible; then was it more fully broached, and let out to the elect world, when he was pierced on the cross, and his blood poured out for our redemption. *Through those holes of his wounds may we draw, and taste that the Lord is gracious*, says St. *Augustin.*

2. We may consider the relish of the goodness of the Lord, expressed by the word, *Taste.* There is

[b] Chap. 1. v. ult. [c] Eph. 1. 7.

a tasting of temporary believers spoke of[d]. Their highest sense of spiritual things (and it will be in some far higher than we easily think) yet is but a taste, and is called so in comparison of the truer fuller sense that true believers have of the grace and goodness of God, which compared with temporary taste, is more than tasting. The former is tasting, rather an imaginary taste than real; but this is a true feeding on the graciousness of God, yet called but a taste in respect of the fulness to come, though it is more than a taste, as you distinguish it from the hypocrite's sense, yet it is no more but a taste, compared with the great marriage feast we look for.

Jesus Christ being *all in all* unto the soul, faith apprehending him, is all the spiritual senses; it is the eye that beholds his matchless beauty, and so kindles love in the soul, and can speak of him as having seen him, and taken particular notice of him[e]. It is the ear that discerns his voice[f]. It is faith that smells *his name poured forth as an ointment*, faith that touches him, and draws virtue from him, and faith that tastes him[g], and here, *If ye have tasted*, &c.

There must be, 1. A firm believing the truth of the promises, wherein the free grace of God is exprest and exhibited to us. 2. A particular application or attraction of that grace to ourselves, which is as the *drawing those breasts of consolation*[h], namely, the promises contained in the Old and New Testament. 3. There is a sense of the sweetness of that grace, being applied or drawn into the soul, and that is properly this taste. No unrenewed man hath any of these in truth, not the highest kind of temporary believer, he cannot have so much as a real lively assent to the general truth of the promises; for had he that, the rest would follow; but as he cannot have the least of these in truth, he may have the counterfeit of them all, not only of assent but application, yea, and a false spiritual joy arising

[d] Heb. vi. 4. [e] Cant. v. 9. [f] Cant. ii. 8.
[g] Cant. ii. 3. [h] Isa. lxvi. 11.

on it; and all these so drawn to the life, that they may resemble much the truth of them: and to give clear characters of difference, is not so easy as most imagine; but doubtless the true living faith of a christian, hath in itself such a particular stamp, as brings with it its own evidence, when the soul is clear, and the light of God's face shines upon it: indeed, in the dark, we cannot read, nor distinguish one mark from another, but when a christian hath light, to look upon the work of God in his own soul, although he cannot make another sensible of that by which he knows it, yet he himself is ascertained, and can say confidently in himself, This I know, that this faith and taste of God I have is true; the seal of the Spirit of God is upon it; and this is the reading of that *new name in the white stone, that no man knows but he that hath it*[i]. There is in a true believer such a constant love to God, for himself, and continual desire after him, simply for his own excellency and goodness, that no other can have. On the other side, would an hypocrite deal truly and impartially by himself, he would readily find out something that would discover him more or less to himself; but the truth is, men are willing to deceive themselves, and thence arises the difficulty.

One man cannot make another sensible of the sweetness of divine grace; he may speak to him of it very excellently, but all he says in that kind is an unknown language to a natural man, he heareth many good words, but he cannot tell what they mean. *The natural man tastes not the things of God, for they are spiritually discerned*[k].

A spiritual man himself doth not fully conceive this sweetness that he tastes of; it is an infinite goodness, and he hath but a taste of it; the *peace of God* is a main fruit of this his goodness; *it passeth all understanding*, says the Apostle[l], not only all natural understanding, as some modify it; but all understanding, even the supernatural understanding of those that enjoy it; and as the godly man cannot

i Revel. ii. 17. [k] 1 Cor. ii. 14. [l] Philip. iv. 7.

conceive it all, so that which he conceives he cannot express it all, and that which he doth express, the carnal mind cannot conceive of it by his expression.

But he that hath indeed tasted of this goodness, O how tasteless are those things to him, that the world calls sweet! as when you have tasted somewhat that is very sweet, it disrelishes other things after it. Therefore can a christian so easily either want, or use with disregard the delights of this earth. His heart is not upon them: for the delight that he finds in God, carrieth it unspeakably away from all the rest, and makes them in comparison seem sapless to his taste.

Solomon tasted of all the delicacies, the choicest dishes that are in such esteem amongst men, and not only tasted, but eat largely of them; and yet see how he goes over them, to let us know what they are, and passes from one dish to another, *This also is vanity*, and of the next *this also is vanity*, and so through all, and of all in general, *all is vanity and vexation of spirit*, or *feeding on the wind*, as the word may be rendered.

3. We come in the third place to the *inference*, *If we have tasted*, &c. Then *lay aside all malice and guile, and hypocrisies and envies, and all evil speakings*, *v.* 1. For it looks back to the whole *exhortation;* sure if you have tasted of that kindness and sweetness of God in Christ, it will compose your spirits, and conform them to him; it will diffuse such a sweetness through your soul, that there will be no place for *malice and guile*. There will be nothing but love and meekness, and singleness of heart; therefore they that have bitter malicious spirits, evidence they have not tasted of the love of God, as the Lord is good, so they that taste it are made like him[m]. *Be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

Again, if ye have tasted, and then desire more,

[m] Eph. iv. 32.

this is the truest sign of it; he that is in a continual hunger and thirst after this graciousness of God, has surely tasted of it. *My soul thirsteth for God,* (saith *David*) he had tasted before, v. 4. he remembers, that *he went to the house of God with the voice of joy.*

This is that happy circle wherein the soul moves; the more they love it, the more they shall taste of this goodness; and the more they taste, the more they shall still love and desire it.

But observe, *if ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious,* then *desire the milk of the word.* This is the sweetness of the *word,* that it hath in it the Lord's graciousness, gives us the knowledge of his love; this they find in it, that have spiritual life and senses, and those senses exercised to discern good and evil; and this engages a christian to further desire of the word: they are fantastical deluding tastes, that draw men from the written word, and make them expect other revelations. This graciousness is first conveyed to us by the *word;* there we taste it, and therefore there still we are to seek it, to hang upon those breasts that cannot be drawn dry; there the love of God in Christ streams forth in the several promises; the heart that cleaves to the word of God, and delights in it, cannot but find in it daily new tastes of his goodness; there it reads his love, and by that stirs up its own to him, and so grows, and loves every day more than the former, and thus is tending from tastes to fulness. It is but little we can receive here, some drops of joy that enter into us; but there we shall enter into joy, as vessels put into a sea of happiness.

Ver. 4. *To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious.*

5. *Ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

THE spring of all the dignities of a christian, and therefore the great motive of all his duties, is,

his near relation to Jesus Christ. Thence it is that the Apostle makes that the great subject of his doctrine, both to represent to his distressed brethren their dignity in that, and to press by it the necessary duties he exhorts unto. Having spoke of their spiritual life, and growth in him, under the resemblance of natural life, he prosecutes it here, by another comparison very frequent in the scriptures, and therefore makes use in it of some passages of those scriptures, that were prophetical of Christ and his church. Though there be here two different similitudes, yet they have so near relation one to another, and meet so well in the same subject, that he joins them together, and then illustrates them severally in the following verses; a *temple*, and a *priesthood*; comparing the saints to both. The former in these words of this verse.

We have in it, 1. The nature of the building; 2. The materials of it; 3. The structure or way of building it.

1*st*, The *nature* is *a spiritual building*. Time and place, we know, received their being from God, and he was eternally before both, and is therefore stiled by the prophet *the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity*[n], but having made the world, he fills it, though not as contained in it, and so the whole frame of it is his palace or temple; but after a more special manner, the higher and statelier part of it, the highest heaven; therefore it is called his *holy place, and the habitation of his holiness and glory:* and on earth, the houses of his public worship are called *his houses;* especially the *Jewish* temple in its time, having in it such a relative typical holiness, which others have not. But besides all these, and beyond them all in excellency, he hath a house wherein he dwells more peculiarly than in any of the rest, even more than in Heaven, taken for the place only, and that is this *spiritual building*. And this is most suitable to the nature of God, as our Saviour says of the necessary conformi-

[n] Isa. lvii. 15.

ty of his worship to himself, *God is a Spirit, and therefore will be worshipped in Spirit and in truth*[o]. So it holds of his house, he must have a spiritual one, because he is a Spirit. So God's temple is his people.

And for this purpose chiefly did he make the world, the heaven and the earth: that in it he might raise this spiritual building for himself to dwell in for ever, to have a number of his reasonable creatures to enjoy him, and glorify him in eternity; and from eternity he knew what the dimensions, and frame, and materials of it should be. The continuance of this present world, as now it is, is but for the service of this work, like the scaffolding about it; and therefore, when this spiritual building shall be fully completed, all the present frame of things in the world, and in the church itself, shall be taken away, and appear no more.

This building is, as the particular designing of its materials will teach us, *the whole invisible church of God*, and each good man is a stone of this building; but as the nature of it is spiritual, it hath this privilege (as they speak of the soul) that it is *tota in toto, & tota in qualibet parte:* as the whole church is the spouse of Christ, and each believing soul hath the same title and dignity to be called so; thus each of these stones is called a *whole temple, temples of the Holy Ghost*[p], though taking the temple or building in a completer sense, they are but each one a part, or a stone of it, as here it is expressed.

The whole excellency of this building is comprised in this, that it is called *spiritual*, distinguishing it from all other buildings, and preferring it to them; and because he speaks immediately after of a priesthood and sacrifices, it seems to be called a *spiritual building*, particularly in opposition to that material temple wherein the *Jews* gloried, which was now null, in regard of its former use, and was quickly after entirely destroyed: but when it stood, and the

[o] Joh. iv. 24. [p] 1 Cor. vi. 19.

legal use of it stood in its fullest vigour, yet in this still it was inferior, that it was not a spiritual house made up of living stones as this, but of a like matter with other earthly buildings.

The spiritual house is the palace of the great King, or his temple. The *Hebrew* word for *palace* and *temple* is one. God's temple is a palace, and therefore must be full of the richest beauty and magnificence, but such as agrees with the nature of it, a spiritual beauty. In that Psalm that wishes so many prosperities, one is, that *their daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace*[q]. Thus is the church, that is called the *King's daughter*[r], but her comeliness is invisible to the world, *she is all glorious within.* Through sorrows and persecutions she may be smoky and black to the world's eye, as the *tents of Kedar;* but in regard of spiritual beauty, she *is comely as the curtains of Solomon:* and in this the *Jews* temple resembles it right, which had most of its riches and beauty in the inside. Holiness is the gold of this spiritual house, and it is inwardly enriched with that.

The glory of the church of God consists not in stately buildings of temples, and rich furniture, and pompous ceremonies; these agree not with its spiritual nature. Its true and genuine beauty is, to grow in spirituality, and so to be liker itself, and have more of the presence of God, and his glory filling it as a cloud. And it hath been observed, that the more the church grew in outward riches and state, the less she grew, or rather the more sensibly she abated in spiritual excellencies. But the spiritualness of this building will better appear in considering particularly,

2dly, The *materials* of it, as here expressed, *To whom coming*, &c. *Ye also as lively stones are*, &c. Now, the whole building is Christ mystical: Christ, together with the entire body of the elect; He, as the foundation, and they as the stones built upon

[q] Psal. cxliv. 12. [r] Psal. xlv. 13.

him; He, the living stone, and they are likewise, by union with him, living stones; He, *having life in himself*, as he speaks[s], and they deriving it from him; He, primitively living, and they by participation: for therefore is he called here a *living stone*, not only because of his immortality and glorious resurrection, being *a lamb that was slain, and is alive again for ever;* but because he is the principle of spiritual and eternal life unto us, a living foundation that transfuses this life into the whole building, and every stone of it, *In whom* (says the Apostle[t]), *all the building is fitly framed together.* It is the Spirit that flows from him which enlivens it, and knits it together, as a living body; for the same word συναρμολογέμενον is used[u], for the church under the similitude of a body. When it is there said[x], *to be built upon the foundation of the prophets and Apostles*, it only refers to their doctrine concerning Christ; and therefore it is added, that He, as being the subject of their doctrine, is the *chief corner-stone.* The foundation then of the church lies not in *Rome*, but in Heaven, and therefore is out of the reach of all enemies, and above the power of *the gates of hell.* Fear not then when you *see the storms arise, and the winds blow against this* spiritual building, for it *shall stand; it is built upon an* invisible immoveable *Rock;* and that great *Babylon, Rome* itself, that under the false title and pretence of supporting this building, is working to overthrow it, shall be utterly overthrown, and laid equal with the ground, and never be rebuilt again. But this *foundation-stone*, as it is commended by its quality, that it is a *living* and enlivening stone, having life, and giving life to those that are built on it; so is also further described by God's chusing it, and its own worth, both opposed to men's disesteem, and therefore said here, to *be chosen of God.* God did indeed from eternity contrive this building, and chuse this same foundation, and accordingly in the fulness of time did perform his

[s] Joh. vi. [t] Eph. ii. 21. [u] Chap. iv. 16. [x] Chap. ii. 20.

purpose; so the thing being one, we may take it either for his purpose or performance, or both, yet it seems most suitable to the strain of the words, and the place after alledged, of laying him in *Sion*, and opposing the rejection of men, that we take it for God's actual employing of Jesus Christ in the work of our redemption: He alone was fit for that work; it was utterly impossible that any other should bear the weight of that service, (and so of this building) but he who was Almighty; therefore the spouse calls him *the select*, or *choice of ten thousand*, yet *rejected of men*. There is an antipathy (if we may so speak) betwixt the mind of God and corrupt nature: the things that are highly esteemed with men are abomination to God; and thus we see here, that which is highly esteemed with God, is cast and *disallowed by men*. But sure there is no comparison; the chusing and esteem of God stands, and by that (judge men of Christ as they will) he is the foundation of this building. And he is in true value answerable to this esteem: he is *precious*, which seems to signify a kind of inward worth, hidden from the eyes of men, blind unbelieving men, but well known to God, and to those to whom he reveals him. And this is the very cause of his rejection by the most, the ignorance of his worth and excellency; as a precious stone that the skilful lapidary esteems of great value, an ignorant beholder makes little or no account of.

These things hold likewise in the other stones of this building, chosen before time; all that should be of this building are fore-ordained in God's purpose, all written in that book before-hand, and then in due time they are chosen, by actual calling according to that purpose, hewed out and severed by God's own hand out of the quarry of corrupt nature; dead stones in themselves, as the rest, but made living, by his bringing them to Christ, and so made *truly precious*, and accounted precious by him that hath made them so. All the stones in this

building are called *God's jewels*[y]. Though they be vilified, and scoffed at, and despised by men; though they pass for fools and the refuse of the world, yet they may easily digest all that, in the comfort of this, if they are chosen of God, and precious in his eyes. This is the very lot of Christ, and therefore by that the more welcome that it conforms them to him, suits these stones to their foundation.

And if we consider it aright, what a poor despiseable thing is the esteem of men! How soon is it past! *It is a small thing for me,* says the Apostle, *to be judged of men*[z]. Now, that God often chuses for this building such stones as men cast away, as good for nothing[a], and where he says[b], that he *dwells in the high and holy place,* What is his other dwelling? His habitation in earth, Is it in great palaces and courts? No. But with him that is of *a contrite and humble spirit.* Now, these are the basest in men's account, yet he chuses them, and prefers them to all other palaces and temples[c], *Thus saith the Lord, The Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my foot-stool: Where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite Spirit, and trembleth at my word.* q. d. "You cannot gratify me with any dwelling, for I "myself have made all, and a surer house than any "you can make me, *The Heaven is my throne,* "*and the earth my foot-stool:* but I, that am so "high, am pleased to regard the lowly."

3dly, We have the *structure,* or way of building, *To whom coming.*] First *coming,* then *built up.* They that come unto Christ, come not only from *the world that lieth in wickedness,* but out of themselves. Of a great many that seem to come to Christ, it may be said that they are not come to him, *because they have not left themselves.* This is be-

[y] Mal. iii. [z] 1 Cor. iv. 3. [a] 1 Cor. i. 26, &c. [b] Isa. li. 17. [c] Isa. lxvi. 1, 2.

lieving on him, which is the very resigning the soul to Christ, and living by him. *Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life*, says Christ[d]. He complains of it as a wrong done to him; but the loss is ours. It is his glory to give us life that were dead; but it is our happiness to receive that life from him. Now these stones come unto their foundation; which imports the moving of the soul to Christ, being moved by his Spirit, and that the will acts, and willingly; for it cannot act otherwise, but as being actuated and drawn by the Father[e], *No man can come to me except the Father draw him:* And the outward mean of drawing, is by the word; it is the sound of that harp, that brings the stones of this spiritual building together, and then being united to Christ, they are built up; that is, as St. *Paul* expresses it[f], *they grow up unto a holy temple in the Lord.*

In times of peace the church may dilate more, and build as it were into breadth: but in trouble, it arises more in height; it is then built upwards; as in cities where men are straitened, they build usually higher than in the country. Notwithstanding the church's afflictions, yet still the building is going forward; it is built (as *Daniel* speaks of *Jerusalem) in troublous times.* And it is this which the Apostle intends, as sûiting with his foregoing exhortation; and this may be read exhortatively too; but taking it rather as asserting their condition, it is for this end, that they may remember to be like it, and grow up. For this end he expressly calls them *living stones;* an adjunct not usual for stones, but here inseparable: And therefore, though the Apostle changes the similitude from infants, to stones; yet he will not let go this quality of *living*, as making chiefly for his purpose.

To teach us the necessity of growth in believers, they are therefore often compared to things that grow, to *trees planted* in fruitful growing places, as *by the rivers of water*, to *Cedars in Lebanon*, where

[d] Joh. v. 40. [e] Joh. vi. 65. [f] Eph. ii. 21.

they are tallest, to *the morning light*, to infants on the breast; and here, where the word seems to refuse it, to *stones*, yet (it must and well doth admit this unwonted epithet) they are called *living and growing stones.*

If, then, you would have the comfortable persuasion of this union with Christ, see whether you find your souls established upon Jesus Christ, finding him as your strong foundation; not resting on yourselves, nor on any other thing either within you, or without you, but supported by him alone; drawing life from him, by virtue of that union, as from a living foundation, so as to say with the Apostle, *I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*[g].

As these stones are built on Christ by faith, so they are cemented one to another by love; and therefore, where that is not, it is but a delusion to think themselves parts of this building. As it is knit to him, it is knit together in itself through him, and if dead stones in a building support and mutually strengthen one another, how much more ought *living stones* in an active lively way to do so? The stones of this building keep their place; the lower rise not up to be in the place of the higher. As the Apostle speaks of the parts of the body, so the stones of this building in humility and love keep their station and grow up in it, *edifying in love*, (as saith the Apostle)[h], importing, that the want of this much prejudices edification.

These stones, because they are living, therefore grow in the life of grace and spiritualness, being a *spiritual building:* So that if we find not this, but our hearts are still carnal, and glued to the earth, *minding earthly things*, wiser in those than in spirituals, this evidences strongly against us, that we are not of this building. How few of us have that spiritualness that becomes the temples of the Holy Ghost or the stones of it? Base lusts are still lodging

[g] Gal. ii. 20. [h] Eph. iv. 16.

and ruling within us, and so our hearts are as cages of unclean birds and filthy spirits.

Consider this as your happiness, and the unsolidness of other comforts and privileges. If some have called those stones happy, that were taken for the building of temples or altars, beyond those in common houses, how true is it here! Happy indeed the stones that God chuses to be living stones in this spiritual temple, though they be hammered and hewed to be polished for it, by afflictions, and the inward work of mortification and repentance. It is worth the enduring all, to be fitted for this building. Happy they, beyond all the rest of men! though they be set in never so great honours, as prime parts of politic buildings, states and kingdoms in the courts of kings, yea, or kings themselves: For all other buildings, and all the parts of them shall be demolished and come to nothing, from the foundation to the cope-stone; all your houses, both cottages and palaces; *the elements shall melt away, and the earth, with all the works in it shall be consumed*, as our Apostle hath it[1]. But this spiritual building shall grow up to Heaven; and being come to perfection, shall abide for ever in perfection of beauty and glory. In it shall be found no *unclean thing*, nor unclean person, but only they *that are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

An holy priesthood.] As the worship and ceremonies of the *Jewish* church were all shadows of Jesus Christ, and have their accomplishment in him, not only after a singular manner in his own person, but in a derived way, in his mystical body, his church. The priesthood of the law represented him as the great high priest, that *offered up himself for our sins*, and that is altogether incommunicable; neither is there any peculiar office of priesthood for offering sacrifice in the christian church, but his alone who is head of it. But this dignity that is here mentioned of a *spiritual priesthood*, offering *spiritual sacrifice*, is common to all those that are

[1] 2 Pet. iii. 10.

in Christ; as they are living stones built on him into a spiritual temple, so they are priests of that same temple, made by him[k]. As he was after a transcendent manner, temple, and priest, and sacrifice; so in their kind are christians, all these three through him; and by his Spirit that is in them, their offerings through him are made acceptable.

We have here, 1. The office; 2. The service of that office; 3. The success of that service.

1. The office. The death of Jesus Christ, as being every way powerful for reconcilement and union, did not only break the partition-wall of guiltiness that stood betwixt God and man, but the wall of ceremonies that stood betwixt the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, made all that believe one with God, *and made of both one*, as the Apostle speaks, united them one to another. The way of salvation was made known, not to one nation only, but to all people; that whereas the knowledge of God was confined to one little corner, it is now diffused through the nations; and whereas the dignity of their priesthood staid in a few persons, all they that believe are now thus dignified to be priests unto God the Father. And this was signified by the rending the vail of the temple at his death, not only that those ceremonies and sacrifices were to cease, as being all fulfilled in him; but that the people of God that were before by that vail held out in the outer-court, were to be admitted into the Holy Place, as being all of them priests, and fitted to offer sacrifices.

The priesthood of the law was holy, and its holiness was signified by many outward things suitable to their manner, by *anointings* and *washings*, and *vestments*; but in this spiritual priesthood of the Gospel, holiness itself is instead of all those, as being the substance of all. The children of God are all anointed and purified, and cloathed with holiness. But then,

2. There is here the service of this office, namely, *to offer*. There is no priesthood without sacrifice,

[k] Rev. i. 6.

for these are relative, and this was the chief employment of the legal priests; now because the priesthood here spoke of, is altogether spiritual, therefore the sacrifices must be so too, as the Apostle here expresses it.

We are saved the pains and cost of bringing bullocks and rams, and other such sacrifices; and these are in their stead, as the apostle speaks[l], of the high priesthood of Christ, that the *priesthood being changed, there followed of necessity a change of the law;* so in this priesthood of christians, there is a change of the kind of sacrifice from the other. All sacrifice is not taken away, but it is changed from the offering of those things formerly in use, to spiritual sacrifices.

Now, these are every way preferable; they are easier and cheaper to us, and yet more precious and acceptable to God. As it follows here in the text, even in the time when the other sacrifices were in request, yet those spiritual offerings had ever the precedence in God's account, and without them, he hated and despised all burnt-offerings, and the largest sacrifices, though they were then according to his own appointment. How much more should we abound in spiritual sacrifice, that are eased of the other? How much more holds that answer now, that was given even in those times[m], *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord,* &c.? You need not all that trouble and expence, that is at hand which God requires most of all, namely, *to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God*[n]. So, that which is peculiarly spoke of Christ holds in christians by conformity with him.

But though the spiritual sacrificing is easier in its own nature, yet to the corrupt nature of man, it is by far the harder. He would rather chuse still all the toil and cost of the former way, if it were in his option. This was the sin of the *Jews* in those times, that they leaned the soul upon the body's service too much, and would have done enough of that to be dispensed from this spiritual

[l] Heb. vii. 12. [m] Mic. vi. 6. [n] Psal. l. 23.

service. Hence are the Lord's frequent reproofs and complaints of this[o]. Hence the willingness in popery for outward work, for penances, and satisfactions of bodies and purses; any thing of that kind, if it might serve, rather than the inward work of repentance and mortification, the spiritual service and sacrifices of the soul: but the answer of all those from God, is that of the prophet, *who hath required these things at your hands*[p]*?*

Indeed the sacred writers press works of charity, if they be done with a right-hand, and the left-hand not so much as acquainted with the business, as our Saviour speaks, *Let not thy left hand know what thy right-hand doth*[q]. They must be done with a right and single intention, and from a right principle moving to them, without any vain opinion of meriting by them with God, or any vain desire of gaining applause with men; but merely out of love to God and to man for his sake. Thus they are one of these spiritual sacrifices; and therefore ought by no means to be neglected by christian priests, that is, by any that are christians.

Another spiritual sacrifice is, *the prayers of the saints*[r], *Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice.* It is not the composure of prayer, or the eloquence of expression, that is the sweetness of it in God's account, and makes it *a sacrifice of a pleasing smell or sweet odour to him,* but the breathing forth the desire of the heart that makes it a spiritual sacrifice, otherwise it is as carnal and dead, and worthless in God's account, as the carcases of beasts. Incense can neither smell, nor ascend without fire: no more doth prayer, unless it arise from a bent of spiritual affection; it is that both makes it smell, and sends it heavenwards, makes it never leave moving upwards till it come before God, and smell sweet in his nostrils, which few, too few, of our prayers do.

[o] Psal. l. Isa. i. &c. [p] Isa. i. 12. [q] Matth. vi. 3.
[r] Revel. v. 8. Psal. cxli. 2.

Praise also is a *sacrifice;* to make respectful and honourable mention of the name of God, and of his goodness; to bless him humbly and heartily[s], *Offer unto God thanksgiving. Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.* And this is that sacrifice that shall never end, but continues in heaven to eternity. Then a *holy course of life* is called *the sacrifice of righteousness*[t], where he shews what sacrifices succeed to those, that as he hath taught at large are abolished. Christ sacrificed for us, and that alone was powerful to take away sin; but our gratulatory sacrifices, praise and alms, are as incense burnt to God, of which, as the standers by find the sweet smell, so the holy life of christians smells sweet to those with whom they live; but the wicked, as putrified carcases, are of a noisome smell to God and man[u], *They are corrupt; they have done abominable works.*

In a word, that sacrifice, that includes all these, and without which none of these can be rightly offered, is *ourselves*, our whole selves. Our *bodies are to be presented a living sacrifice*[x], and they are not that without our souls. It is our heart given that gives all the rest, for that commands all. *My son give me thy heart*, and then the other will follow, *thine eyes will delight in my ways.* This makes the eyes, ears, tongue and hands, and all to be holy, as God's peculiar, being once given and consecrate to him; and therefore it becomes sacrilege to turn them to any unholy use. This makes a man delight to hear, and speak of things that concern God, and to think on him frequently, to be holy in his secret thoughts, and all his ways. In every thing we bring him, every thanksgiving and prayer we offer, his eye is upon the heart, he looks if it be along with our offering; and if he miss it, he cares not for all the rest, but throws it back again.

The heart must be offered withal, and the whole

[s] Heb. xiii. 15. Psal. l. 14, 23. [t] Psal. iv. 6. Phil. iv. 18. Heb. xiii. 16. [u] Ps. xiv. 4. [x] Rom. xii. 1.

heart, all of it entirely given to him: *Se totum obtulit Christus pro nobis.* In another sense, which crosses not this, it must not be *whole* but *broken*[y]. But if thou find it unbroken, yet give it him, with a desire that it may be broken; and if it be broken, and if when thou hast given it him, he break it more, yea and melt it too, yet thou shalt not repent thy gift; for he breaks and melts it, that he may refine it, and make it up in a new and excellent frame, and may impress his own image on it, and make it holy, and so like to himself.

Let us then give him ourselves, or nothing; and to give ourselves to him, is not his advantage but ours, as the philosopher said to his poor scholar, who, when others gave him great gifts, told him, *he had nothing but himself to give:* It is well, said he, *and I will endeavour to give thee back to thyself, better than I received thee.* Thus doth God with us, and a christian makes himself his daily sacrifice; he renews this gift of himself every day to God, and receiving it every day bettered again, still he hath the more delight to give it, as being fitter for God, the more it is sanctified by former sacrificing.

Now that whereby we offer all other spiritual sacrifices, and even ourselves, is love. That is the holy fire that burns up all, sends up our prayers, and our hearts, and our whole selves a whole burnt-offering to God: and as the fire of the altar, it is originally from Heaven, being kindled by God's own love to us; and by this the church and each believer ascends like a *straight pillar of smoke*, as the word is[z], going even up to God *perfumed with aloes and all the spices*, all the graces of the Spirit received from Christ, but above all with his own merits.

How far from this is the common multitude of us, though professing to be christians! who considers his holy calling? As the peculiar holiness of the ministry should be much in their eye and thoughts

[y] Psal. li. [z] Cant. iii. 6.

that are called to it, as they should study to be answerably eminent in holiness, so all that are christians, consider you are priests unto God, being called a *holy priesthood*; thus you ought to be. But if we speak what we are indeed, we must say rather, we are an unholy priesthood, a shame to that name and holy profession; instead of the sacrifice of a Godly life, and the incense of prayer and praise, in families and alone, what is with many but the filthy vapours of profane speaking and a profane life, as a noisome smell arising out of a dunghill?

But you, that have once offered up yourselves unto God, and are still doing so, with all the services you can reach, continue to do so, and be assured, that how unworthy soever yourselves, and all your offerings be, yet they shall not be rejected.

The 3d thing here observable is the success of that service, *accceptable to God by Jesus Christ*[a]. The children of God do delight in offering sacrifices to him: but if they might not know that they were well taken at their hands, this would discourage them much; therefore this is added. How often do the Godly find it in their sweet experience, that when they come to pray, he welcomes them, and gives them such evidences of his love, as they would not exchange for all worldly pleasures? and when this doth not so presently appear at other times, yet they ought to believe it. He accepts themselves and their ways offered in sincerity, though never so mean; though they sometimes have no more, but a sigh or groan, it is most properly a spiritual sacrifice.

Stay not therefore away, because thou, and the gifts thou offerest, are inferior to the offering of others. No, none are excluded for that, only give what thou hast, and act with affection, for that he regards most. Under the law they that had not a lamb, were welcome with a pair of pigeons; so that the christian may say: "*What I am* "*Lord, I offer myself unto thee, to be wholly*

[a] Heb. xiii. 16.

" *thine; and had I a thousand times more of out-*
" *ward or inward gifts, all should be thine; had I*
" *a greater estate, or wit, or learning, or power,*
" *I would endeavour to serve thee with all. What*
" *I have, I offer thee, and it is most truly thine,*
" *it is but of thy own that I give thee.*" None needs forbear sacrifice for poverty, for that which God desires is the heart, and there is none so poor but hath a heart to give him.

But meanness is not all, there is a guiltiness on ourselves, and on all we offer; our prayers and services are polluted. But this hinders not neither; for our acceptance, is not for ourselves, but for one, who hath no guiltiness at all. *Acceptable by Jesus Christ.*] In him our persons are cloathed with righteousness, and in his cloathing, we are as *Isaac* said of *Jacob* in his brother's garments, *as the smell of a field that the Lord hath blessed*[b]. And all our other sacrifices, our prayers, and services, if we offer them by him; and put them into his hand, to offer to the Father, then doubt not they will be accepted in him; for this *by Jesus Christ*, is relative both to our offering and acceptance. We ought not to offer any thing, but by him[c]. And so we are well pleasing, for he is his well-beloved Son, in whom his soul is delighted; not only delighted and pleased with himself, but *in him*, with all things and persons that appear in him, and are presented by him.

And this alone answers all our doubts; for we ourselves, as little as we see that way, yet may see so much in our best services, so many wanderings in prayer, so much deadness, &c. as would make us still doubtful of acceptance; so that we might say with *Job*, *Although he had answered me, yet would I not believe that he had hearkned to me*[d], were it not for this, that our prayers, and all our sacrifices pass through Christ's hand. He is that *Angel that hath much sweet odours*, to mingle with *the prayers of the Saints*[e]. He purifies them with his own

[b] Gen. xxvii. 27. [c] Heb. xiii. 15. [d] Job. ix. 16.
[e] Rev. viii. 3, 4.

merits and intercession, and so makes them pleasing unto the Father. How ought our hearts to be knit to him? by whom we are brought into favour with God, and kept in favour with him, in whom we obtain all the good we receive, and in whom all we offer is accepted! In him are all our supplies of grace, and our hopes of glory.

Ver. 6. *Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture; behold I lay in Sion, a chief, corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.*

THAT which is the chief of the works of God, is therefore very reasonably the chief subject of his word; as both most excellent in itself, and of most concernment for us to know.

And this is the saving of lost mankind by his Son. Therefore is *his name as precious ointment* or perfume diffused through the whole scriptures. All these holy leaves smell of it, not only those that were written after his coming, but those that were written before. *Search the Scriptures*, says he himself, *for they testify of me*[a], namely, the scriptures of the Old Testament which were only then written, And to evidence this, both himself, and his apostles make so frequent use of their testimony, and we find so much of them inserted into the New, as being both one in substance; their lines meeting in the same Jesus Christ as their centre.

The Apostle here, having expressed the happy estate and dignity of christians under a double notion, 1. Of a spiritual house or temple; 2. Of a spiritual priesthood, he amplifies and confirms both from the writings of the prophets. The former, *verse* 6, 7, 8; the latter, *verse* 9. The places that he cites, touching this building, are most pertinent, for they have clearly in them, all that he spoke of it, both concerning the foundation, and the edifice; as the first in these words of *Isaiah*[b], *Behold I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, &c.*

[a] Joh. v. 39. [b] Chap. xxviii. 16.

Let this commend the scriptures much to our diligence, and affection, that their great theme is our Redeemer, and redemption wrought by him: that they contain the doctrine of his excellencies,—are the lively picture of his matchless beauty. Were we more in them, we should daily see more of him in them, and so of necessity love him more. But we must look within them: the letter is but the case; the spiritual sense is that we should desire to see. We usually huddle them over, and see no farther than their outside, and therefore, find so little sweetness in them; we read them, but *we search them not*, as he requires. Would we dig into those golden mines, we should find treasures of comfort that cannot be spent, but would furnish us in the hardest times.

The prophecy here cited, if we look upon it in its own place, we shall find inserted in the middle of a very sad denunciation of judgment against the Jews. And this is usual with the prophets, particularly with this evangelical prophet *Isaiah*, to uphold the spirits of the godly, in the worst times, with this one great consolation, the promise of the Messiah; as weighing down all, both temporal distresses, and deliverances. Hence are those sudden ascents (so frequent in the prophets) from their present subject to this great *hope of Israel*. And if this expectation of a Saviour was so pertinent a comfort in all estates, so many ages before the accomplishment of it, how wrongfully do we undervalue it being accomplished, if we cannot live upon it, and answer all with it, and sweeten all our griefs in this advantage, that there *is a foundation stone laid in* Sion, *on which they that are builded shall be sure not to be ashamed!*

In the words there are five things, 1. This foundation-stone; 2. The laying of it; 3. The building on it; 4. The firmness of this building; And 5, or lastly, the greatness and excellency of the whole work.

1*st*, For the *foundation* called here a *chief cor-*

ner-stone. Though the prophets words are not precisely rendered, yet the substance and sense is one: There both the foundation and corner-stone is expressed, the corner-stone in the foundation being the main support of the building, and throughout the corner-stones uniting and kniting the building together; and therefore this same word of *a corner*, is frequently taken in scripture for *princes*, or heads of people[c], because good governors, and government are that, which upholds, and unites the societies of people in states or kingdoms, as one building. And Jesus Christ is indeed the alone head, and king of his church, that gives it laws, and rules it in wisdom, and righteousness; the alone rock on which his church is built, not *Peter* (if we will believe St. *Peter* himself, as here he teacheth us) much less his pretended successors; he is the foundation and corner-stone that knits together the walls of Jews and Gentiles, *having made of both one*, as St. *Paul* speaks[d], and unites the whole number of believers into one everlasting temple, and bears the weight of the whole fabric.

Elected] or chosen out for the purpose, and altogether fit for it. *Isaiah* hath it *a stone of trial*, or *a tried stone.* As things amongst men are best chosen after trial, so Jesus Christ certainly known by the Father, as most fit for that work, to which he chose him before he tried him, as after, upon trial in his life, and death, and resurrection, he proved fully answerable to his Father's purpose, in all that was appointed him.

All the strength of angels combined had not sufficed for that business; but the wise architect of this building knew both what it would cost, and what a foundation was needful to bear so great and so lasting a structure as he intended. Sin having defaced and demolished the first building of man in the integrity of his creation; it was God's design, out of the very ruins of fallen man, to raise a more lasting edifice than the former; one that should not be sub-

[c] Jud. xx. 2. 1. Sam. xiv. 38. [d] Eph. ii. 14.

ject to decay, and therefore he fitted for it a foundation that might be everlasting: the sure founding is the main thing requisite, in order to a lasting building; therefore that it might stand for the true honor of his Majesty, (which *Nebuchadnezzar* vainly boasted of his *Babel*) he chose his own Son, *made flesh*; he was God, that he might be a strong foundation; he was man, that he might be suitable to the nature of the stones whereof the building was to consist, that they might join and cement together.

Precious.] Inestimably precious, by all the conditions that can give worth to any, by rareness, and by inward excellency, and useful virtues. Rare he is out of doubt; there is not such a person in the world again: therefore he is called by the same prophet, *wonderful*[e], full of wonders; the power of God and the frailty of man dwelling together in his person; *the ancient of days*[f], becoming an infant: he that *stretched forth the Heavens*, was bound up in swaddling clothes in that his infancy, and in his full age stretched forth on the cross; altogether *spotless* and *innocent*, and yet suffering not only the unjust cruelties of men, but the just wrath of God his Father; *the Lord of life*, and yet dying. His excellency appears in the same things, in that he is the Lord of life, *God blessed for ever;* equal with the Father: the sparkling brightness of this precious stone is no less than this, that he is *the brightness of the Father's glory*[g], so bright, that men could not have beheld him appearing in himself; therefore, he vailed it with our flesh; and yet through that it shined and sparkled so, that the Apostle St. *John* says of himself, and those others that had eyes opened, and looked right upon him, *He dwelt amongst us*, and he had a tent like ours, and yet through that *we saw his glory, as the glory of the only begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth*[h], the Deity filling his human nature

[e] Isa. ix. 6. [f] Dan. vii. 9. [g] Heb. i. 3.
[h] Joh. i. 14.

with all manner of grace in its highest perfection. And Christ is not only thus excellent in himself, but of precious virtue, which he lets forth and imparts to others; of such virtue, that a touch of him is the only cure of spiritual diseases. Men tell of strange virtues of some stones; but it is certain that this precious stone hath not only virtue to heal the sick, but even to raise the dead. Dead bodies he raised in the days of his abode on earth, and dead souls he still doth raise by the power of his word. The prophet *Malachi* calls him *the Sun of Righteousness*, iv. 2. which hath in it the rareness and excellency we speak of: he is singular; as there is but one sun in the world, so but one Saviour, and his lustre such a stone as outshines the sun in its fullest brightness: and then for his useful virtue, he adds, that *he hath healing under his wings*; this his worth is unspeakable, and remains infinitely beyond all these resemblances.

2dly, There is here the laying of this foundation, and it is said to be laid in *Sion*; that is, it is laid in the church of God. And it was first laid in *Sion* literally, being then the seat of the church and true religion: he was laid there, in his manifestation in the flesh, and suffering, and dying, and rising again, and afterwards being preached through the world, became the foundation of his church in all places where his name was received; and so was a stone growing great, till it *filled the whole earth*, as *Daniel* hath it, ii. 35.

He saith, *I lay*; by which the Lord expresseth this his own proper work, as the psalmist speaks of the same subject[i], *This is the Lord's doing; and it is marvellous in our eyes.* So[k] speaking of this promised Messiah, *The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.*

And this is not only said *I lay*, because he had the first thought of this great work, (as the model of it was in his mind from eternity, and the accomplishment of it was by his almighty power in the

[i] Psal. cxviii. 23. [k] Isa. ix. 7.

morning of his Son's birth, and his life and death, and resurrection) but also to signify the freeness of his grace, in giving his Son to be a foundation of happiness to man, without the least motion from man, or motive in man, to draw him to it. And this seems to be signified by the unexpected inserting of these prophetical promises of the Messiah, in the midst of complaints of people's wickedness, and threatning them with punishment; to intimate that there is no connexion betwixt this work and any thing on man's part, fit to procure it. "Although "you do thus provoke me to destroy you, yet of "myself I have other thoughts, there is another "purpose in my head." And[l] it is observable to this purpose, that that clearest promise of the virgin's son is given, not only unrequired, but being refused by that profane king *Ahaz*.

This again, that the Lord himself is the layer of this corner stone, teaches us the firmness of it, which is likewise expressed in the prophet's words, very emphatically, by redoubling the same word, *Musad, Musad; fundamentum, fundamentum.*

So[m], *I have set my king upon my holy hill of Sion;* who then shall dethrone him? *I have given him the heathen for his inheritance, and the ends of the earth for his possession;* and who will hinder him to take possession of his right? If any offer to do so, what shall they be, but a number of earthen vessels fighting against an iron sceptre; and so certainly breaking themselves in pieces. Thus here, *I lay this foundation stone:* and if I lay it, who shall remove it? and what I build upon it, who shall be able to cast down? For it is the glory of this great master-builder, that the whole fabric which is of his building cannot be ruined; and for that end hath he laid an unmoveable foundation; and for that end are we taught and reminded of its firmness, that we may have this confidence concerning the church of God that is built upon it. To the eye of nature, the church seems to have no foundation; as

[l] Isa. vii. 10, 13. [m] Psal. ii. 6.

Job speaks of the earth, *that it is hung upon nothing*[n], and yet as the earth remaineth firm, being established in its place by the word and power of God, the church is most firmly founded upon *the word made flesh, Jesus Christ is its chief corner-stone.* And as all the winds that blow cannot remove the earth out of its place; neither can all the attempts of men, no, nor of *the gates of Hell, prevail against the church*[o]. It may be beaten with very boisterous storms, *but it cannot fall, because it is founded upon this rock*[p]. Thus it is with the whole house, and thus with every stone in it, as here it follows, *He that believeth shall not be confounded.*

3dly, There is next the building on this foundation. To be built on Christ is plainly to believe in him. But in this the most deceive themselves: they hear of great privileges and happiness in Christ, and presently imagine it is all theirs, without any more ado; as that mad man of *Athens*, who wrote up all the ships that came into the Haven for his own. We consider not what this is to believe in him, and what is the necessity of this believing, that we may be partakers of the salvation that he hath wrought. It is not they that have heard of him, or that have some common knowledge of him, or are able to discourse of him, and speak of his person and nature aright; but *they that believe in him.* Much of our knowledge is, as that of a geometrician that can measure land exactly in all its dimensions, but possesseth not a foot thereof; or of a poor philosopher, who defineth riches exactly, and discourseth of their nature, but possesseth none. And truly it is but a lifeless unsavoury knowledge men have of Christ, by all books and study, till he reveal himself, and persuade the heart to *believe in him.* Then indeed it says of all the reports it heard, when it sees him, and is made one with him; I heard much, yet *the half was not told me.* There is in lively faith, when it is infused into the soul, a clearer knowledge of

[n] Job xxvi. 7. [o] Matth. xvi. 18. [p] Matth. vii. 25.

Christ and his excellency than before; and with it a recumbency of the soul upon him, as the foundation of its life and comfort; a resolving to rest on him, and not to depart from him upon any terms. Though I be beset on all hands, be accused by the law and mine own conscience, and by Satan, and have nothing to answer for myself; yet here I will stay, for I am sure in him there is salvation, and no where else. All other refuges are but lies, as it is in the words before these in the prophet, poor base shifts that will do no good. God hath laid this precious stone in *Sion*, for this very purpose, that weary souls may rest upon it; and why should not I make use of it according to his intention? He hath not forbid any, how wretched soever, to believe, but commands it, and himself works it where he will, even in the vilest sinners.

Think it not enough that you know this stone is laid, but see whether you are built on it by faith. The multitude of imaginary believers lie round about it, but they are never the better nor the surer for that, no more than stones that lie loose in heaps near unto a foundation, but are not joined to it. There is no benefit to us by Christ, without union with him; no comfort in his riches, without interest in them, and title to them, by that union. Then is the soul right, when it can say, *He is altogether lovely*, and as the spouse there, *He is mine, my well-beloved*[q]. And this union is the spring of all spiritual consolations; and faith, by which we are thus united, is a divine work. He that laid this foundation in *Sion* with his own hand, works likewise, with the same hand, faith in the heart, by which it is knit to this corner-stone. It is not so easy as we imagine to believe[r]. Many that think they believe, are on the contrary like those of whom the prophet there speaks, *hardened in sin*, and carnally secure, whom he represents as in covenant with hell and death, walking in sin, and yet promising themselves impunity.

[q] Cant. iii. 16. [r] Eph. i. 19.

4thly, There is the firmness of this building, namely, *He that believeth on him shall not be confounded.*) This firmness is answerable to the nature of the foundation. Not only the whole frame, but every stone of it abideth sure. It is a simple mistake, to judge the persuasion of perseverance to be self-presumption: they that have it are far from building it on themselves, but their foundation is that which makes them sure; because it doth not only remain firm itself, but indissolubly supports all that are once built on it. In the prophet whence this is cited, it is, *Shall not make haste*, but the sense is one: they that are disappointed and ashamed in their hopes, run to and fro, and seek after some new resource; this they shall not need to do that come to Christ. The believing soul makes haste to Christ, but it never finds cause to hasten from him; and though the comfort it expects and longs for be for a time deferred, yet it gives not over, knowing that in due time it shall rejoice, and shall not have cause to blush and think shame of its confidence in him. *David* expresseth this distrust, by *making haste*[s], *I was too hasty when I said so.* Frustrated hopes, especially where they have been raised high, and continued long, do reproach men with folly, and so shame them. And thus do all earthly hopes serve us, when we lean much upon them. We find these things usually that have promised us most content, pay us with vexation, and they not only prove broken reeds, deceiving our trust, but hurtful, running their broken splinters into our hand that leaned on them. This sure foundation is laid for us, that our souls may be established on it, and be as *Mount Sion that cannot be removed*[t]. Such times may come as will shake all other supports, but this holds out against all[u], *Though the earth be removed, yet will not we fear.* Though the frame of the world were cracking about a man's ears, he may hear it unaffrighted that is built on this foundation: why then do we chuse to *build*

[s] Psal. xxxi. 22. and cxvi. 11. [t] Psal. cxxv. 1. [u] Psal. xlvi. 2.

upon the sand? Believe it, wheresoever we lay our confidence and affection besides Christ, it shall sooner or later repent us and shame us; either happily in time, while we may yet change them for him, and have recourse to him; or miserably, when it is too late. Remember that we must die, and *must appear before the judgment-seat of God*, and that the things we doat on here have neither power to stay us here, nor have we power to take them along with us, nor if we could, would they at all profit us there; and therefore when we look back upon them all at parting, we shall wonder what fools we were to make so poor a choice: and in *that great day wherein all faces shall gather blackness*[x], and be filled with confusion, that have neglected to make Christ their stay when he was offered them, then it shall appear how happy they are that have trusted in him; *they shall not be confounded*, but shall *lift up their faces*, and be acquitted in him. In their present estate they may be exercised, but then *they shall not be confounded*, nor ashamed; there is a double negation in the original, *by no means*, they shall *be more than conquerors through him that hath loved them*[y].

5thly, The last thing observable is the greatness and excellency of the work, intimated in that first word, *behold*, which imports this work to be very remarkable, and calls the eyes to fix upon it.

The Lord is marvellous in the least of his works, but in this he hath manifested more of his wisdom, and power, and let out more of his love to mankind, than in all the rest, yet we are foolish, and childishly gaze about us upon trifles, and let this great work pass unregarded, we scarce afford it half an eye. Turn your wandering eyes this way, look upon this *precious stone*, and behold him, not in mere speculation, but so behold him, as to lay hold on him: for we see he is therefore here set forth, that we may *believe on him, and so not be confounded*, that we may attain this blessed union,

[x] Joel ii. 6. [y] Rom. viii. 37.

that cannot be dissolved. All other unions are dissoluble: A man may be plucked from his dwelling house and lands, or they from him, though he hath never so good title to them; may be removed from his dearest friends, the husband from the wife, if not by other accidents in their lifetime, yet sure by death, the great dissolver of all those unions, and of that straitest one, of the soul with the body; but it can do nothing against this union, but on the contrary perfects it, for *I am persuaded* (says St. *Paul*) *that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor heigth nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*[z].

There is a twofold mistake concerning faith. They that are altogether void of it, abusing and flattering themselves in a vain opinion that they have it; and on the other side, they that have it, misjudging their own condition, and so depriving themselves of much comfort and sweetness that they might find in their believing.

The former is the worse, and yet the far commoner evil, and what one says of wisdom is true of faith, *Many would seek after it, and attain it, if they did not falsly imagine that they have attained it already*[a]. There is nothing more contrary to the lively nature of faith, than for the soul not to be at all busied with the thoughts of its own spiritual condition, and yet this very character of unbelief passes with a great many for believing. They doubt not, that is indeed they consider not what they are; their minds are not at all on these things; are not awakened to seek diligently after Jesus, so as not to rest till they find him. They are well enough without him, it suffices them, to hear there is such a one, but they ask not themselves, is he mine, or no? Sure if that be all, not to doubt, the brutes

[z] Rom. viii. 38, 39.

[a] Puto multos potuisse ad sapientiam pervenire, nisi putassent se jam pervenisse. SEN. de Tranq.

believe as well as they. It were better out of all question to be labouring under doubtings; if it be a more hopeful condition, to find a man groaning and complaining, than speechless, and breathless, and not stirring at all.

There be in spiritual doubtings two things; there is a solicitous care of the soul concerning its own estate, and diligent enquiry into it; and that is laudable, being a true work of the Spirit of God; but the other thing in them, is perplexity and distrust which arises from darkness and weakness in the soul; as where there is a great deal of smoke, and no clear flame, it argues much moisture in the matter, yet it witnesseth certainly that there is fire there; and therefore dubious questioning of a man concerning himself, is a much better evidence, than senseless deadness that most take for believing. Men that know nothing in sciences have no doubts. He never truly believed that was not made first sensible and convinced of unbelief. This is the Spirit's first errand in the world, to *convince it of sin*; and the sin is this, that *they believe not*[b]. If the faith that thou hast grew out of thy natural heart of itself, be assured it is but a weed. The right plant of faith is always set by God's own hand, and it is watered and preserved by him, because exposed to many hazards; he watches it night and day[c], *I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it; I will keep it night and day.*

Again, how impudent is it in the most, to pretend they believe, while they wallow in profaneness. If faith unite the soul unto Christ, certainly it puts it into participation of his Spirit; *for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*, says St. *Paul*. This faith in Christ brings us into communion with God. Now, *God is light*, says St. *John*, and therefore infers, *If we say we have fellowship with God, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth*[d]. The lie appears in our practice, an unsuitableness in our carriage; as one said of him

[b] Joh. xvi. 8, 9. [c] Isa. xxvii. 3. [d] 1 Joh. i. 6.

that signed his verse wrong, *Fecit solœcismum manu.*

But there be imaginary believers that are a little more refined, that live after a blameless, yea, and a religious manner, as to their outward behaviour; and they yet are but appearances of christians, have not the living work of faith within, and all these exercises are *dead works* in their hands. Amongst these some may have such motions within them as may deceive themselves, while their external deportment deceives others, some transient touches of desire to Christ, upon the unfolding of his excellencies in the preaching of the word, and upon some conviction of their own necessity, and may conceive some joy upon thoughts of apprehending him; and yet all this proves but a vanishing fancy, an embracing of a shadow. And because men that are thus deluded meet not with Christ indeed, nor do really find his sweetness; therefore within a while, they return to the pleasure of sin, and *their latter end proves worse than their beginning*[e]. Their hearts could not possibly be stedfast, because there was nothing to fix them on, in all that work wherein Christ himself was wanting.

But the truly believing soul that is brought unto Jesus Christ, and fastened upon him by God's own hand, abides stayed on him, and departs not. And in these the very belief of the things that are spoken concerning Christ in the Gospel, their persuasion of divine truth, is of a higher nature than the common consent that is called historical, another knowledge and evidence *of the mysteries of the kingdom*, than natural men can have. This is indeed the ground of all, the very thing that causes a man rest upon Christ, when he hath a persuasion wrought in his heart by the Spirit of God, that Christ is an able Redeemer, a sufficient Saviour, *able to save all that come to him*[f]. Then upon this, the heart resolves upon that course: seeing I am persuaded of this, that *whoso believes in him shall not perish, but have*

[e] 1 Pet. ii. 20. [f] Heb. vii. 25.

everlasting life, or, as it is here, *shall not be confounded.* I am to deliberate no longer, this is the thing I must do; I must lay my soul upon him, upon one who is an Almighty Redeemer: and it does so. Now, these first actings of faith have in themselves an evidence that distinguishes them from all that is counterfeit, a light of their own, by which the soul wherein they are, may discern them, and say, "This "is the right work of faith;" especially when God shines upon the soul, and clears it in the discovery of his own work within it.

And further, they may find the influence of faith upon the affections, *purifying* them, as our Apostle says of it[g]. Faith knits the heart to a holy head, a pure Lord, the spring of purity; and therefore cannot chuse but make it pure; it is a beam from Heaven that raises the mind to a heavenly temper. Although there are remains of sin in a believing soul, yet it is a hated wearisome guest there. It is not there as its delight, but as its greatest grief, and malady; of that it is still lamenting and complaining, and had rather be rid of it than gain a world. Thus it is purified from affecting sin.

So where these are, a spiritual apprehension of the promises, and a cleaving of the soul unto Christ, and such a delight in him, as makes sin vile and distasteful, so that the heart is set against it, and, as the needle touched with the loadstone, is still turned towards Christ, and looks at him in all estates: the soul that is thus disposed, hath certainly interest in him; and therefore ought not to affect an humour of doubting, but to conclude, that how unworthy soever in itself, yet being in him, *it shall not be ashamed:* not only it shall never have cause to think shame of him, but all its just cause of shame in itself shall be taken away; it shall be covered with his righteousness, and appear so before the Father, Who must not think, "If my sins were to be set "in order, and appear against me, how would my "face be filled with shame? Though there were

[g] Act. xv. 9.

"no more, if some thoughts that I am guilty of "were laid to my charge, I were utterly ashamed "and undone. Oh! there is nothing in myself but "matter of shame, but yet in Christ more matter "of glorying, who endured shame, that we might "not be ashamed. We cannot distrust ourselves "enough, nor trust enough in him. Let it be right "faith, and there is no excess in believing. Though "I have sinned against him, and abused his good-"ness, yet I will not leave him; for *whither should "I go*, he, and none but he, *hath the words of "eternal life*[h]. Yea, though he being so often of-"fended, should threaten to leave me to the shame "of my own follies, yet I will stay by him, and "wait for a better answer, and I know I shall ob-"tain it; this assurance being given me for my "comfort, that *whosoever believes in him shall not "be ashamed.*"

Ver. 7. *Unto you therefore which believe he is precious; but unto them who be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,*

8. *And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed.*

BESIDES all the opposition that meets faith within, in our hearts, it hath this without, that it rows against the great stream of the world's opinion; and therefore hath need, especially where it is very tender and weak, to be strengthened against that. The multitude of unbelievers, and the considerable quality of many of them in the world, are continuing causes of that very multitude: and the fewness of them that truly believe, doth much to the keeping of them still few; and as this prejudice prevails with them that believe not, so it may sometimes assault the mind of a believer, when he thinks how many, and many of them wise men in the world, re-

[h] Joh. vi. 68.

ject Christ. Whence can this be? Particularly the believing *Jews*, to whom this epistle is addressed, might think it strange, that not only the *Gentiles* that were strangers to true religion, but their own nation, that was the select people of God, and had the light of his oracles kept in amongst them only, should yet so many of them, yea, and the chief of them, be despisers and haters of Jesus Christ; and that they that were best versed in the law, and so seemed best able to judge of the Messiah foretold, should have persecuted Christ all his life, and at last put him to a shameful death.

That they may know, this makes nothing against him, nor ought to invalidate their faith at all, but rather indeed testifies with Christ, and so serves to confirm them in believing, the apostle makes use of those prophetical scriptures, that foretel the unbelief and contempt with which the most would entertain Christ; as old *Simeon* speaks of him, when he was come agreeably to these former predictions, That he should be a *sign of contradiction*[a], as he was the promised sign of salvation to believers, so he should be a very mark of enmities and contradictions to the unbelieving world; the places the apostle here useth, suit with his present discourse, and the words cited from *Isaiah* in the former verse, continuing the resemblance of *a corner stone*, they are partly taken from *Psal.* cxviii. partly out of the eighth chapter of *Isaiah.*

Unto you, &c.] Wonder not that others refuse him, but believe the more for that, because you see the word to be true even in their not believing of it, it is fulfilled and verified by their very rejecting it as false.

And whatsoever are the world's thoughts concerning Christ, that imports not; for they know him not: but you that do indeed believe, I dare appeal to yourselves, your own faith, that you have of him, whether he is not precious to you, if you do not really find him fully answerable to all that is spoken

[a] Luke ii. 34.

of him in the word, and to all that you have accordingly believed concerning him.

We are here, 1. To consider the opposition of the persons: and then, 2. Of the things spoken of them.

I. For the opposition of the persons, they are opposed under the name of believers, and disobedient, or unbelievers; for the word is so near that it may be taken for unbelief, and it is by some so rendered: and the things are fully as near, as the words that signify them, *diobedience* and *unbelief*. 1. Unbelief is itself the grand disobedience. For this is the work of God, that which the gospel mainly commands[b], *That ye believe*; therefore the apostle calls it *the obedience of faith*[c]. And there is nothing indeed more worthy the name of obedience, than the subjection of the mind to receive and believe those supernatural truths that the gospel teaches concerning Jesus Christ. To obey, so as to have, as the apostle speaks, the *impression* of that divine pattern stamped upon the heart, to have the heart delivered up, as the word there is, and laid under it, to receive it[d]. The word here used for disobedience, signifies properly *unpersuasion*; and nothing can more properly express the nature of unbelief than that; and it is the very nature of our corrupt hearts: we are *children of disobedience* or *unpersuasibleness*[e], altogether incredulous towards God who is truth itself, and pliable as wax in satan's hand; he works in such what he will, as there the apostle expresses. They are most easy of belief to him, that is *the very father of lies*, as our Saviour calls him, a *liar and a murderer from the beginning*[f], murdering by lies, as he did in the beginning.

2. Unbelief is radically all other disobedience; for all flows from unbelief. This we least of all suspect; but it is the bitter root of all that ungodliness that abounds amongst us. A right and lively

[b] John vi. 29. [c] Rom. i. 5. [d] Rom. vi. 17. [e] Eph. ii. 2. [f] John viii. 44.

persuasion of the heart concerning Jesus Christ alters the whole frame of it, *casts down its high lofty imaginations, and brings* not only the outward actions, but the very *thoughts unto the obedience of Christ*[g].

II. As for the things spoken concerning these disobedient unbelievers, these two testimonies taken together have in them these three things; 1. Their rejection of Christ; 2. Their folly; 3. Their misery in so doing.

1. Their rejection of Christ; they did not receive him, as the Father appointed and designed him, as the foundation and *chief corner stone*, but slighted him, and threw him by, as unfit for the building; and this did not only the ignorant multitude, but the builders; they that professed to have the skill, and the office or power of building, the doctors of the law, the scribes and pharisees and chief priests, who thought to carry the matter by the weight of their authority, as over balancing the belief of those that followed Christ: *Have any of the rulers believed in him? But this people who know not the law are cursed*[h].

We need not wonder then, that not only the powers of the world are usually enemies to Christ, and that the contrivers of policies, those builders, leave out Christ in their building, but that the pretended builders of the church of God, though they use the name of Christ, and serve their turn with that, yet reject himself, and oppose the power of his spiritual kingdom. There may be wit and learning, and much knowledge of the scriptures amongst those that are haters of the Lord Christ and the power of godliness, and corrupters of the worship of God. It is the spirit of humility and obedience, and saving faith, that teaches men to esteem Christ, and build upon him.

2. But the vanity and folly of those builders opinion appears in this, that they are overpowered by the great architect of the church; his purpose stands,

[g] 2 Cor. x. 5. [h] John vii. 48, 49.

notwithstanding their rejection of Christ, he is still made the head corner-stone. They cast him away by their miscensures and reproaches put upon him, and by giving him up to be crucified, and then cast into the grave, and appointing a stone to be rolled upon this *stone*, which they had so rejected, that it might appear no more, and so thought themselves sure: but even from thence did he arise, and *became the head of the corner*. The disciples themselves spake, you know, very doubtfully of their former hopes, *We believed this had been he that would have delivered Israel;* but he corrected their mistake, first by his word, shewing them the true method of that great work, *Ought not Christ to suffer first these things and so enter into glory*[1]? And then really, by making himself known to them as risen from the dead. When he was by these rejected, and lay lowest, then was he nearest his exaltation; as *Joseph* in the prison was nearest his preferment. And thus is it with the church of Christ; when it is brought to the lowest and most desperate condition, then is deliverance at hand; it prospers, and gains in the event, by all the practices of men against it. And as this corner stone was fitted to be so, by the very rejection, even so is it with the whole building; it rises the higher the more men seek to demolish it.

8. The misery of them that believe not is expressed in the other word, *He is to them a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence;* because they will not be saved by him, they shall stumble and fall, and be broken to pieces on him, as it is in *Isaiah*, and in the evangelists: but how is this? Is he that came to save, become a destroyer of men, he whose name is salvation, proves he destruction to any? He does not prove such in himself, his primary and proper use is the former, to be a foundation for souls to build and rest upon: but they that instead of building upon him, will stumble, and fall on him, what wonder, being so firm a stone, though they be bro-

[1] Luke xxiv. 21. 26.

ken by their fall; thus we see the mischief of unbelief, that as other sins disable the law, it disables the very gospel to save us, and turns life itself into death to us. And this is the misery, not of a few, but of many in *Israel*; many that hear of Christ, by the preaching of the gospel, shall lament that ever they heard that sound, and shall wish to have lived and died without it; finding so great an accession to their misery, by the *neglect of so great salvation.* They are said to *stumble at the word*, because the things that are therein testified concerning Christ, they labour not to understand and prize aright; but either altogether slight them, and account them foolishness, or misconceive and pervert them.

The *Jews* stumbled at the meanness of Christ's birth and life, and the ignominy of his death; not judging of him according to the scriptures; and we in another way think we have some kind of belief, that he is the Saviour of the world; yet not making the scripture the rule of our thoughts concerning him, many of us undo ourselves, and stumble and break our necks upon this rock, mistaking Christ and the way of believing; looking on him as a Saviour at large, and judging that enough, not endeavouring to make him ours, and to embrace him upon the terms of that new covenant, whereof he is Mediator.

Whereunto also they were appointed.] This the apostle adds for the further satisfaction of believers in this point, how it is that so many reject Christ, and stumble at him; telling them plainly, that the secret purpose of God is accomplished in this, having determined to glorify his justice on impenitent sinners, as he shews his rich mercy in them that believe. Here it were easier to lead you into a deep, than to lead you forth again. I will rather stand on the shore, and silently admire it, than enter into it. This is certain, that the thoughts of God are all no less just in themselves than deep and unsoundable by us. His justice appears clear in that man's destruction is always the fruit of his own sin: but to give

causes of God's decrees without himself, is neither agreeable with the primitive being of the nature of God, nor with the doctrine of the scriptures; this is sure that God is not bound to give us further account of these things, and we are bound not to ask it. Let these two words (as St. *Augustin* says) answer all, *What art thou O man*[k]*?* And *O the depth*[l]*!*

Our only sure way to know that our names are not in that black line, and to be persuaded, that he hath chosen us to be saved by his Son, is this, to find that we have chosen him, and are built on him by faith, which is the fruit of his love, that first chooseth us. And that we may read in our esteem of him.

He is precious.] or *your honour.* The difference is small; you account him your glory, and your gain; he is not only *precious* to you, but *preciousness* itself. He is the thing that you may account of, your jewel, which if you keep, though you be robbed of all besides, you know yourselves to be rich enough.

To you that believe.] Faith is absolutely necessary to make this due estimate of Christ.

1. The most excellent things, while their worth is undiscerned and unknown, affect us not: now, faith is the proper seeing faculty of the soul, in relation to Christ; that inward light must be infused from above, to make Christ visible to us; without it, though he is beautiful, yet we are blind, and therefore cannot love him for that beauty. But by faith we are enabled to see him that is *fairer than the children of men*[m], yea to see in him *the glory of the only begotten Son of God*[n], and then it is not possible but to account him precious, and to bestow the entire affection of our hearts upon him. And if any say to the soul, *What is thy beloved more than another*[o]*?* it willingly lays hold on the question, and is glad of an opportunity to extol him.

[k] Rom. ix. 20. [l] Rom. xi. 33. [m] Psal. xlv. 2.
[n] John i. 14. [o] Cant. iii. 9.

2. Faith, as it is that which discerns Christ, so it alone appropriates, or makes him our own. These are the two reasons of esteeming and affecting any thing, its own worth and our interest in it; and faith begets this esteem of Christ by both; *first*, It discovers to us his excellencies, that we could not see before; and then it makes him ours, gives us possession of whole Christ, all that he hath, and is. As it is faith that commends Christ so much, and describes his comeliness in that song, that word is the voice of faith, that expresses propriety, *My well-beloved is mine, and I am his*[p], and these together make him most precious to the soul. Having once possession of him, then it looks upon all his sufferings as endured particularly for it, and the benefit of them all as belonging to itself. Sure it will say, "Can I choose but account him precious, "that suffered shame, that I might not be ashamed; "and suffered death that I might not die; that "took that bitter cup of the Fathers's wrath, and "drunk it out, that I might be free from it?"

Think not that you believe, if your hearts be not taken up with Christ, if his love do not possess your soul, so that nothing is precious to you in respect of him; if you cannot despise and trample upon all advantages that either you have or would have, for Christ, and count them with the great apostle, *Loss and dung in comparison of him*[q]. And if you do esteem him, labour for increase of faith, that you may esteem him more; for as faith grows, so will he still be more precious to you. And if you would have it grow, turn that spiritual eye frequently to him that is the proper object of it; for even they that are believers may possibly abate of their love and esteem of Christ, by suffering faith to lie dead within them, and not using it in beholding and applying of Christ. And the world, or some particular vanities may insensibly creep in, and get into the heart, and cost them much pains ere they can be thrust out again. But when they are daily review-

[p] Cant. ii. 16. [q] Philip. iii. 8.

ing those excellencies that are in Christ, which first persuaded their hearts to love him, and discovering still more and more of them, his love will certainly grow, and will chase away those follies that the world doats upon, as unworthy to be taken notice of by such a soul.

Ver. 9. *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priest-hood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*

It is a matter of very much consolation and instruction to christians to know their own estate, what they are, as they are christians. This *epistle* is much and often upon this point for both those ends; that the reflecting on their dignities in Christ, may uphold them with comfort under suffering for him; and also that it may lead them in doing and walking as becomes such a condition. Here it hath been represented to us by a building, a spiritual temple, and by a priesthood conformable to it.

The former is confirmed and illustrated by testimonies of scripture in the preceding verses; the latter in this verse, in which, though it is not expressly cited, yet it is clear that the apostle hath reference to[r], where this dignity of priesthood, together with the other titles here expressed, is ascribed to all the chosen people of God. It is there a promise made to the nation of the *Jews*, but under the condition of obedience; and therefore is most fitly here applied by the apostle to the believing *Jews*, to whom particularly he writes.

It is true, that the external priesthood of the law is abolished by the coming of this great high priest; Jesus Christ being the body of all those shadows: But this promised dignity of *spiritual priesthood*, is so far from being annulled by Christ, that it is altogether dependent on him; and therefore fails in those that reject Christ, although they be of that nation

[r] Exod. xix. 5, 6.

to which this promise was made. But it holds good in all, of all nations that believe, and particularly, says the apostle, *it is verified in you.* You that are believing *Jews*, by receiving Christ, do also receive this dignity.

As the legal priesthood was removed by Christ's fulfilling all that it prefigured, so he was rejected by them that were at his coming in possession of that office; as the standing of that their priesthood was inconsistent with the revealing of Jesus Christ; so they that were then in it, being ungodly men, their carnal minds had a kind of antipathy against him. Though they pretended themselves builders of the church, and by their calling ought to have been so, yet they threw away the foundation stone that God had chosen and designed; and in rejecting it, manifested that they themselves were rejected of God: but on the contrary, you that have laid your souls on Christ by believing, have this your chusing him as a certain evidence, that God hath chosen you to be his *peculiar people*, yea to be so dignified, as to be a *kingly priesthood*, through Christ.

We have here to consider, 1. The estate of christians, in the words that here describe it; 2. The opposition of it to the state of unbelievers; 3. The end of it.

1. The state of christians, *a chosen generation*[s].] The Psalmist there speaks first of God's universal sovereignty, then of his peculiar choice; *The earth is the Lord's:* but there is a select company, appointed for this holy mountain, described; and the description is closed thus, *This is the generation of them that seek him.* Thus[t], whence this is taken; *for all the earth is mine*, and that nation, which is a figure of the elect of all nations, God's peculiar, beyond all others in the world. As men that have great variety of possessions, yet have usually their special delight in some one beyond all the rest, and choose to reside most in it, and bestow most expence on it to make it pleasant: thus doth the Lord

[s] Psal. xxiv. [t] Deut. x. 14, 15. so Exod. xix. 5.

of the whole earth choose out to himself from the rest of the world, a number that are *a chosen generation.*

Chusing here, is the work of effectual calling, or severing of believers from the rest; for it signifies a difference in their present estate, as do likewise the other words joined with it. But this election is altogether conformable to that of God's eternal decree, and is no other but the execution or performance of it; God's framing of this his building, just according to the idea of it, which was in his mind and purpose before all time; the drawing forth and investing of such into this christian, this kingly priesthood, whose names were expressly written up for it in the book of life.

Generation.] This imports them to be of one race or stock, as the *Israelites*, who were by outward calling the chosen of God, were all the *seed of Abraham according to the flesh:* So they that believe in the Lord Jesus, are *children of the promise*[x]; and all of them by their new birth, one people or generation. They are of one nation, belonging to the same blessed land of promise, all citizens of the new *Jerusalem*, yea all children of the same family, whereof Jesus Christ, the *root of Jesse*, is the stock, who is the great *king*, and the *great high priest.* And thus they are a *royal priesthood.* There is no devolving of his royalty or priesthood on any other, as it is in himself; for his proper dignity is supreme and incommunicable, and there is no succession in his order, he *lives for ever*, and *is priest for ever*[y], and *king for ever* too[z]; but they that are descended from him, do derive from him by that new original this double dignity, in that way that they are capable of it, to be likewise kings and priests, as he is both. They are of the seed-royal, and of the holy seed of the priesthood, in as much as they partake of a new life from Christ; first there is his own dignity expressed, then his dignifying us, who is himself the *first begotten among*

[x] Gal. iv. 28. [y] Psal. cx. 4. [z] Psal xlv. 6.

the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth[a]; and then, as follows[b], *hath made us kings and priests unto God the Father.*

A royal priesthood.] That the dignity of believers is expressed by these two together, by *priesthood* and *royalty*, teaches us the worth and excellency of that holy function taken properly, and so by analogy, the dignity of the ministry of the gospel which God hath placed in his church, instead of the priesthood of the law; for therefore doth this title of spiritual priesthood fitly signify a great privilege and honour that christians are promoted to, and is joined with that of kings, because the proper office of priesthood was so honourable. Before it was established in one family, the chief, the first-born of each family had right to this, as a special honour; and amongst the heathens in some places, their princes and greatest men, yea their kings were their priests, and universally the performing of their holy things, was an employment of great honour and esteem amongst them. Though human ambition hath strained this consideration too high, to the favouring and founding of a monarchical prelacy in the christian world, yet that abuse of it ought not to prejudge us of this due and just consequence from it, that the holy functions of God's house have very much honour and dignity in them. And the apostle we see[c], prefers the ministry of the gospel to the priesthood of the law. So then they mistake much that think it a disparagement to men that have some advantage of birth or wit more than ordinary, to bestow them thus, and judge the meanest persons and things good enough for this high calling. Sure this conceit cannot have place, but in an unholy, irreligious mind, that hath either very mean thoughts of God, or none. If they that are called to this holy service, would themselves consider this aright, it would not puff them up, but humble them; comparing their own worthlessness with this great work, they would wonder at God's dispensation, that

[a] Rev. i. v. [b] ver. 6. [c] 2 Cor. iii.

should thus have honoured them, as St. *Paul* in this connection speaks of himself, as *less than the least of all saints*[d]: So the more a man rightly extols this his calling, the more he humbles himself under the weight of it, which should make ministers very careful to walk more suitably to it in eminency of holiness; for in that consists the true dignity of it.

There is no doubt that this kingly priesthood is the common dignity of all believers, *this honour have all the saints;* they are kings, have victory and dominion given them over the powers of darkness and the lusts of their own hearts, that held them captive, and domineered over them before. Base slavish lusts, not born to command, yet are the hard taskmasters of unrenewed minds; and there is no true subduing them, but by the power and Spirit of Christ. They may be quiet for a while in a natural man, but they are then but asleep; as soon as they awake again, they return to hurry, and drive him with their wonted violence. Now this is the benefit of receiving the kingdom of Christ into a man's heart, that it makes him a king himself. All the subjects of Christ are kings, not only in regard of that pure crown of glory they hope for, and shall certainly attain; but in the present, they have a kingdom, that is the pledge of that other, overcoming the world and satan and themselves, by the power of faith. *Mens bona regnum possidet;* it is true; but there is no mind truly good, but that wherein Christ dwells. There is not any kind of spirit in the world so noble as that spirit that is in a christian, the very Spirit of Jesus Christ that great king, the *Spirit of glory*, as our apostle calls it below[e]. This is a sure way to ennoble the basest and poorest among us; this royalty takes away all attainders, and leaves nothing of all that is past to be laid to our charge, or to dishonour us.

They are not shut out from God, as they were before; but being in Christ are brought near unto him,

[d] Eph. iii. 8. [e] Chap. iv.

and have free access to the throne of his grace[g]. They resemble in their spiritual state the legal priesthood very clearly, 1. In their consecration: 2. In their service: and 3. in their laws of living.

1. In their consecration. The levitical priests were washed; therefore this is expressed[h], *He hath washed us in his blood*, and then follows, *made us kings and priests.* There was no coming near unto God in his holy services as his priests, unless we were cleansed from the guiltiness and pollution of our sins. This that pure and purging blood doth, and it alone: no other laver can do it; no water but that *fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness*[i]. No blood, none of all that blood of legal sacrifices[k], but only the blood of that spotless lamb that *takes away the sins of the world*[l]. So with this, 2. We have that other ceremony of the priest's consecration, which was by sacrifice, as well as by washing; for Christ at once offered up himself as our sacrifice, and let out his blood for our washing, and with good reason is that prefixed there[m], *He hath loved us*, and then it follows, *washed us in his blood.* That precious stream of his heart-blood that flowed, for our washing, told clearly that it was a heart full of unspeakable love that was the source of it. 3. There is anointing, namely, the graces of the Spirit, conferred upon believers, flowing unto them from Christ: For *it is of his fulness that we all receive, grace for grace*[n], and the apostle St. *Paul* says[o], that *we are established and anointed in Christ:* It was poured on him as our head, and runs down from him unto us. He is *Christ*, and we are *Christians*, as partakers of his anointing. The consecrating oil of the priests was made of the richest ointments and spices, to shew the preciousness of the graces of God's Spirit that are bestowed on those spiritual priests; and as that holy oil was not for common use, nor for any other persons to be anointed withal, save the priests only, so is the Spirit of

[g] Heb. x. 21, 22. [h] Rev. i. 5. [i] Zech. xiii. 1. [k] Heb. ix. 12.
[l] John i. 29. [m] Rev. i. 5. [n] John i. 16. [o] 2 Cor. i. 21

grace a peculiar gift to believers. Others might have costly ointments amongst the *Jews*, but none of that same sort with the consecration-oil. Natural men may have very great gifts of judgment, and learning, and eloquence, and moral virtues; but they have none of this precious oil, namely, the Spirit of Christ communicated to them: no, all their endowments are but common and profane. That holy oil signified particularly eminency of light and knowledge in the priests; therefore in christians there must be light. They that are grossly ignorant of spiritual things are surely not of this order; this anointing is said *to teach us all things*[p]. That holy oil was of a most fragrant sweet smell, by reason of its precious composition; but much more sweet is the smell of that spirit wherewith believers are anointed: Those several odoriferous graces, that are the ingredients of their anointing oil, that heavenly mindedness, and meekness, and patience, and humility, and the rest, that diffuse a pleasant scent into the places and societies where they come; their words, actions and their deportment smelling sweet of them. 4. Their garments wherein they were inaugurate, and which they were after to wear in their services, are outshined by that purity and holiness wherewith all the Saints are adorned; but more by that imputed righteousness of Christ, *those pure robes* that are put upon them, wherein they appear before the Lord, and are accepted in his sight. These priests are indeed *cloathed with righteousness*, according to that of the Psalmist[q].

5. They were to have the offerings put into their hands; from thence, *filling of the hand*, signifies consecrating to the priesthood. And thus doth Jesus Christ, that is the consecrator of these priests, put into their hands by his Spirit these offerings they are to present unto God. He furnishes them with prayers, and praises, and all other oblations, that are to be offered by them; he gives them themselves, that they are to offer a living sacrifice, res-

[p] 1 Joh. ii. 27. [q] Psal. cxxxii. 9.

cuing them from the usurped possession of satan and sin.

2dly, Let us consider their services, which were divers; to name the chief, 1. They had charge of the sanctuary, and the vessels of it, and the lights, and were to keep the lamps burning. Thus the heart of every christian, is made a *temple to the Holy Ghost*, and he himself, as a priest consecrated unto God, is to keep it diligently, and the furniture of divine grace in it; to have the light of spiritual knowledge within him, and to nourish it by drawing continually new supplies from Jesus Christ. *2dly*, They were to bless the people, and truly it is this spiritual priest-hood, *the elect*, that procure blessings upon the rest of the world, and particularly on the places where they live; they are daily to offer the incense of prayer, and other spiritual sacrifices unto God, as the Apostle expresseth it above, *verse* 5, not to neglect those holy exercises together, and apart. And as the priests offered not only for themselves, but for the people: Thus christians are to extend their prayers, and intreat the blessings of God for others, especially for the public estate of the church. As the Lord's priests, they are to offer up those praises to God, that are his due from the other creatures; which praise him indeed, yet cannot do it after that manner, as these priests do. Therefore they are to offer as it were their sacrifices for them, as the priests did for the people, and because the most of men neglect to do this, and cannot do it indeed because they are unholy, and not of this priesthood; therefore should they be so much the more careful of it, and diligent in it. How few of these, whom the Heavens call to by their light and revolution that they enjoy, do offer that sacrifice which becomes them, by acknowledging *the glory of God which the Heavens declare*[r]. This therefore is as it were, put into the hands of these priests, namely, the Godly, to do.

3dly, Let us consider their course of life. We

[r] Psal. xix. 1.

shall find rules given to the legal priests, stricter than to others, of avoiding legal pollutions, *&c.* And from these this spiritual priesthood must learn an exact holy conversation, keeping themselves from the pollutions of the world, as here it follows, *a holy nation*, and that of necessity; if a priesthood, then holy: Purchased indeed to be a peculiar treasure to God[s], at a very high rate. He spared not his only Son, nor did the Son spare himself; so that these priests ought to be the Lord's peculiar portion. All believers are his clergy; and as they are his portion, so he is theirs. The priests had no assigned inheritance among their brethren, and the reason is added, for *the Lord is their portion;* and truly so they needed not envy any of the rest, they had the choicest of all, the Lord of all. Whatsoever a christian possesses in the world, yet being of this spiritual priesthood, he is *as if he possessed it not*[t], lays little account on it: That which his mind is set on, is, how he may enjoy God, and find clear assurance that he hath him for his portion.

It is not so mean a thing to be a christian as we think; it is a holy, an honourable, a happy estate: Few of us can esteem it, or do labour to find it so. No, we know not these things, our hearts are not on them, to make this dignity and happiness sure unto our souls. Where is that true greatness of mind and holiness to be found that becomes those that are *kings* and *priests* unto God? That contempt of earthly things, and minding of Heaven that should be in such? But sure, as many as find themselves indeed partakers of these dignities, will study to live agreeably to them, and will not fail to love that Lord Jesus who hath purchased all this for them, and exalted them to it; yea, humbled himself to exalt them.

2dly, We proceed to the opposition of the estate of christians to that of unbelievers. We best discern, and are most sensible of the evils and good of

[s] Exod. xix. 5. [t] 1 Cor. vii. 30.

things by comparison. In outward condition how many be there that are vexing themselves with causeless murmurings and discontents, that if they would look upon the many in the world that are in a far meaner condition than they, it would cure that evil, and make them not only content, but chearful and thankful. But the difference here expressed is far greater and more considerable than any that can be in outward things. Though the estate of a christian is very excellent and precious, and rightly valued, hath enough in itself to commend it, yet it doth and ought to raise our esteem of it the higher, when we compare it both with the misery of our former condition, and the continuing misery of those that abide still, and are left to perish in that woeful estate. We have here both these parallels. The happiness and dignity to which they are chosen and called, is opposed to the rejection and misery of them that continue unbelievers and rejecters of Christ.

Not only natural men, but even they that have a spiritual life in them; yet when they forget themselves, are subject to look upon the things that are before them with a natural eye, and to think hardly, or at least doubtfully, concerning God's dispensation; beholding the flourishing and prosperities of the ungodly, together with their own sufferings and distresses, thus[n]. But when they turn the other side of the medal, and view them with a right eye, and by a true light, they are no longer abused with those appearances. When they consider unbelievers, *as strangers*, yea *enemies to God*, and slaves to satan, held fast in the chains of their own impenitency and unbelief, and by those bound over to eternal death; and then see themselves called to the liberties and dignities of the Sons of God, partakers of the honour of the only begotten Son on whom they have believed, made by him *kings and priests unto God the Father*, then sure they have other thoughts. It makes them no more envy, but pity the ungodly, and account all their

[n] Psal. lxxiii. &c.

pomp, and all their possessions, what it is indeed, no other but a glistering misery, and themselves happy in all estates. It makes them to say with *David*, *The lines have fallen to me in a pleasant place, I have a goodly heritage.* It makes them digest all their sufferings and disgraces with patience, yea with joy, and think more of praising than complaining, of shewing forth his honour, who hath so honoured them; especially considering the freeness of his grace, that it was that alone made the difference, calling them altogether undeservedly from that same darkness and misery in which unbelievers are deservedly left.

Now the *third* thing here to be spoken to, is the *end* of their calling, *to shew his praise*, &c. And that we may the more prize the reasonableness of that their happy estate to which God hath exalted them, it is expressed in other terms, which therefore we will first consider, and then the end.

To magnify the grace of God the more, we have here, 1. Both the terms of this motion, or change from whence, and to what it is; 2. The principle of it, the calling of God.

I. For the terms of this motion, 1. The term from whence, it is, *From darkness.* There is nothing more usual, not only in divine but in human writings, than to borrow outward sensible things to express things intellectual; and amongst such expressions there is none more frequent than that of *light* and *darkness* transferred, to signify the good and evil estate of man: As sometimes for his outward prosperity or adversity, but especially for things proper to his mind, the mind is called *light*, because the seat of truth, and truth is most fitly called *light*, being the chief beauty and ornament of the rational world, as light is of the visible. And as the light, because of that its beauty is a thing very refreshing and comfortable to them that behold it, as *Solomon* says, *It is a pleasant thing to see the sun;* so is truth a most delightful thing to the soul that rightly apprehends it.

This may help us to conceive of the spiritual sense in which it is here taken. The estate of lost mankind is indeed nothing but darkness, being destitute of all spiritual truth and comfort, and tending to utter and everlasting darkness.

And it is so, because by sin the soul is separate from God, who is the first and highest light, that primitive truth, as he is light in himself: As the Apostle St. *John* tells us, *God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all;* expressing the excellency and purity of his nature, so he is light relatively to the soul of man[x], *The Lord is my light,* says *David.*

And the soul being made capable of divine light, cannot be happy without it: Give it what other light you will, still it is in darkness, so long as it is without God, being the peculiar light and life of the soul. And as truth is united with the soul in apprehending it, and light with the visive faculty, so that the soul may have God as its light, it must of necessity be in union with God. Now sin hath broke that union, and so cut off the soul from its light, and plunged it into spiritual darkness.

Hence all that confusion and disorder in the soul, which is ever the companion of darkness, *Tohu vahohu,* as at first, when *darkness was on the face of the deep*[y]. Being *ignorant of God* and of ourselves, it follows that we love not God, *because we know him not:* Yea (though we think it a hard word) we are *haters of God;* for not only doth our darkness import ignorance of him, but *an enmity* to him, because he is light, and we are darkness. And being *ignorant of ourselves,* not seeing our own vileness, because we are in the dark, we are pleased with ourselves; and having left God, do love ourselves instead of God. Hence are all the wickednesses of our hearts and lives, which are no other but, instead of obeying and pleasing God, a continual sacrificing to those *Gillulim,* those base dunghill-gods our own lusts. For this the

[x] Psal. xxvii. [y] Gen. i. 2.

Apostle gives as the root of all those evils[z], *Covetous, boasters*, &c. Because in the first place, *lovers of themselves*, therefore *proud*, &c. and *lovers of pleasures more than of God;* and this self-love cannot subsist without gross ignorance, minds so darkened that we cannot withal see what we are: For if we did, it were not possible but we would be far of another mind, very far out of loving and liking with ourselves. Thus our souls being filled with darkness, are likewise full of uncleanness, as that goes along too with darkness; they are not only dark as dungeons, but withal filthy as dungeons use to be[a], *Understandings darkened, alienated from the life of God;* and therefore it is added[b], *they give themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.* Again, in this state they have no light of solid comfort. Our great comfort here is not in any thing present, but in hope; now *being without Christ and without God, we are without hope*[c].

And as the estate from whence we are called by grace, is worthily called *darkness;* so, *2dly*, that to which it calls us deserves as well the name of *light.* As Christ likewise, that came to work our deliverance, is frequently so called in scripture[d], and elsewhere, not only in regard of his own nature, being God equal with the Father, and therefore light, as he is *God of God*, and therefore *light of light:* But relating to men[e], *that life was the light of men;* as he is stiled *the word*, and *the wisdom of the Father*, not only in regard of his own knowledge, but as revealing him unto us[f], compared with v. 30. and he is stiled by *Malachi* iv. 2. *the Sun of Righteousness.* Now the sun is not only a luminous body, but a luminary, giving light unto the world[g].

He is our *light*, opposed to *all kind of darkness*, to the dark shadows of the ceremonial law, which

[z] 2 Tim. iii. 2. [a] Eph. iv. 18. [b] v. 19. [c] Eph. ii. 12.
[d] Joh. i. 9. [e] John j. 4. [f] John i. 18. 1 Cor. i. 24.
[g] Gen. i. 15.

possibly are here meant, as part of that darkness, from which the Apostle writes that these *Jews* were delivered also by the knowledge of Christ: When he came, *the day broke, and the shadows flew away.* He is likewise opposed to the darkness of the *Gentile* superstitions and idolatries; therefore these two are joined by old *Simeon*[h], *A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel.*

And to all that believe of both, he is light opposed to the *ignorance, slavery* and *misery* of their natural estate, teaching them by his Spirit, the things of God, and reuniting them with God, who is the light of the soul. *I am,* says he, *the light of the world, he that follows me shall not walk in darkness*[i].

And it is that mysterious union of the soul with God in Christ (which a natural man so little understands) that is the cause of all that *spiritual light of grace,* that a believer does enjoy. There is no right knowledge of God, to man once fallen from it, but in his Son, no comfort in beholding God, but through Him. Nothing but just anger and wrath to be seen in God's looks, but through him, *in whom he is well pleased.* The Gospel shews us the light of the knowledge of God[k], but it is *in the face of Jesus Christ;* therefore the kingdom of light, opposed to that of darkness[l], is called *the kingdom of his dear Son,* or the *Son of his love.*

There is a spirit of light and knowledge flows from Jesus Christ into the souls of believers, that acquaints them with *the mysteries of the kingdom of God,* which cannot otherwise be known. And this spirit of knowledge is withal a spirit *of holiness;* for purity and holiness is likewise signified by this light. He removed that huge dark body of sin that was betwixt us and the Father, and eclipsed him from us; the light of his countenance, *sanctifieth by truth;* it is a light that hath heat with it, and hath influence upon the affections, warms them towards God

[h] Luke ii. 32. [i] Joh. viii. 12. [k] 2 Cor. iv. 6. [l] Col. i. 13.

and divine things; this darkness here is indeed the shadow of death; and so they that are without Christ, till he visit them, are said, *to sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death*[m]. So this *light* is *life*[n], doth enlighten and enliven, begets new actions and motions in the soul. The right notion that a man hath of things as they are, works upon him, and stirs him accordingly; so this light discovers a man to himself, and lets him see his own natural filthiness; it makes him loath himself, and fly from and run out of himself. And the excellency he sees in God, and his Son Jesus Christ, by this new light, inflames his heart with their love, fills him with estimation of the Lord Jesus, and makes the world, and all things in it that he esteemed before, base and mean in his eyes.

Then from this light arises *spiritual joy* and *comfort;* so light signifies frequently, as in that of the Psalmist, the latter clause expounds the former[o], *Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart.* As this *kingdom of God's dear Son*, that is, this kingdom of *light*, hath righteousness in it; so it hath *peace and joy in the Holy Ghost*[p]. It is a false prejudice the world hath taken up against religion, that it is a sour melancholy thing: There is no truly lightsome and comfortable life but it. All others, have they what they will, live in darkness; and is not that truly sad and comfortless? Would you think it a pleasant life, though you had fine cloaths, and good diet, never to see the sun, but still to be kept in a dungeon with them? Thus are they that live in wordly honour and plenty, but still without God; they are in continual darkness with all their enjoyments.

It is true, the light of believers is not here perfect, and therefore their joy is not perfect neither; it is sometimes over-clouded; but the comfort is this, that it is an everlasting light, it shall never go out in darkness, as is said in *Job* xviii. 5. *of the*

[m] Luke i. 79. [n] John i. 4. [o] Psal. xcvii. 11.
[p] Rom. xiv. 17.

light of the wicked, and it shall within a while be perfected. There is a bright *morning without a cloud* that shall arise. The Saints have not only light to lead them in their journey, but much purer light at home, *an inheritance in light*[q]. The land where their inheritance lieth is full of light, and their *inheritance* itself *is light*; for the vision of God for ever is that inheritance. That city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon to shine in it, for *the glory of the Lord doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof*[r]. As we said, that increated light is the happiness of the soul, the beginnings of it are our happiness begun; they are beams of it sent from above, to lead us to the fountain and fulness of it. *With thee*, says *David*, *is the fountain of life, and in thy light shall we see light*[s].

There are two things spoken of this light, to commend it, *his marvellous light*; that it is after a peculiar manner *God's*, and then that it is *marvellous*. All light is from him, the light of sense, and that of reason; therefore he is called the *Father of lights*[t]. But this *light* of grace is after a peculiar manner his, being a light above the reach of nature, infused into the soul, in a supernatural way, the light of the elect world, where God specially and graciously resides. Natural men may know very much in natural things, and it may be in supernatural things, after a natural manner. They may be full of school-divinity, and able to discourse of God and his Son Christ, and the mystery of redemption, &c. and yet they want this peculiar light, by which Christ is known to believers. They may speak of him; but it is in the dark; they see him not, and therefore they love him not. The light they have, is as the light of some things that shine only in the night, a cold glow-worm-light that hath no heat with it at all.

Whereas a soul that hath some of *his light*, God's peculiar light communicated to it, sees Jesus Christ,

[q] Colos. i. 12. [r] Rev. xxi. 23. [s] Psal. xxxvi. 9.
[t] Jam. i. 17.

and loves and delights in him, and walks with him. A little of this light is worth a great deal, yea more worth than all that other common, speculative and discoursing knowledge that the greatest doctors can attain unto. It is of a more excellent kind and original; it is from Heaven, and you know that one beam of the sun is more worth than the light of ten thousand torches together; it is a pure undecaying heavenly light, whereas the other is gross and earthly (be it never so great) and lasts but a while. Let us not therefore think it incredible, that a poor unlettered christian may know more of God in the best kind of knowledge, than any the wisest and most learned natural man can do; for the one knows God only by man's light, the other knows him by his own light, and that is the only right knowledge. As the sun cannot be seen but by its own light, so neither can God be savingly known, but by his own revealing.

Now this light being so peculiarly God's, no wonder if it be *marvellous*. The common light of the world is so, though because of its commonness, we think not so. The Lord is marvellous in wisdom, in power, in all his works of creation and providence: but above all, in the workings of his grace. This light is unknown to the world, and so *marvellous* in the rareness of beholding it, that there be but a few that partake of it. And to them that see it is *marvellous*; because in it, they see so many excellent things that they knew not before; as if a man were born and brought up, till he came to the years of understanding in a dungeon, where he had never seen light, and were brought forth on a sudden; or not to need that imagination, take the man that was born blind, at his first sight, after Christ had cured him, what wonder, think we, would seize upon him, to behold on a sudden the beauty of this visible world, especially of that sun, and that light that makes it both visible and beautiful! but much more matter of admiration is there in this light to the soul, that is brought newly from the darkness

of corrupt nature; they see as it were a new world, and in it such wonders of the rich grace and love of God, such matchless worth in Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, that their souls are filled with admiration: and if this light of grace be so *marvellous*, how much more *marvellous* shall the light of glory be in which it ends?

Hence learn, 1. To esteem highly of the gospel, in which this light shines unto us; the Apostle calls it therefore, the *glorious gospel*[u]. Sure we have no cause to be ashamed of it, but of ourselves, that we are so unlike it.

2. Think not you that are grossly ignorant of God, and his Son Christ, and the mysteries of salvation, that you have any portion as yet in his grace; for the first character of his renewed image in the soul is light, as it was his first work in the natural or material world. What avails it us to live in the noon-day light of the gospel, if our hearts be still shut against it, and so we be nothing but darkness within? as a house that is close shut up, and hath no entry for light, though it is day without, still it is night within.

3. Consider your delight in the works of darkness, and be afraid of that great condemnation, *This is the condemnation of the world, that light is come into it, and men* love darkness *rather than light*[x].

4. You that are indeed partakers of this happy change, let your hearts be habitations of light[y]; *Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.* Study much to increase in spiritual light and knowledge, and withal in holiness and obedience. If your light be this light of God, truly spiritual light, these will accompany it. Consider the rich love of God, and account his light *marvellous*, as in itself, so in this, that he hath bestowed it on you; and seeing *you were once darkness, but now are light in the Lord*, I beseech you, nay the Apostle, and in him

[u] 2 Cor. iv. 4. [x] Joh. iii. 19. [y] Eph. v. 11.

the Spirit of God does it, *Walk as children of the light*[z].

But, to proceed to speak to the other parts of this verse, under the second head, *the principle of this calling.*

It is known and confessed to be a chief point of wisdom in a man, to consider what he is, from whom he hath that his being, and to what end. When a christian hath thought on this in his natural being, as he is a man, he hath the same to consider over again of his spiritual being, as he is a christian, and so a new creature. And in this notion, all the three are very clearly represented to him in these words, 1. What he is. First, by these titles of dignity in the first words of this verse. And again by an estate of light in the last clause of it. 2. Whence a christian hath this excellent being, is very clearly expressed here, *He hath called.* That God, who is the author of all kind of being, hath given you this, *called you from darkness to his marvellous light.* If you be *a chosen generation*, it is he that hath *chosen you*[a]. If you be a *royal priesthood*, you know that it is he that hath anointed you. If *a holy nation*, he hath sanctified you[b]. If *a peculiar* or *purchased people*, it is he that hath bought you[c]. All are in this calling, and they are all one thing. 3. To what end, to *shew forth his praises.* Of the first of these in all the several expressions of it we have spoken before, now are to be considered the other two.

2. *He hath called you.*] They that live in the society, and profess the faith of christians, are called unto *light*, the light of the gospel that shines in the church of God. Now this is no small favour and privilege, while many people are left *in darkness, and in the shadow of death*, to have this light arise upon us, and to be in the region of it, the church, the *Goshen* of the world; for by this outward light we are invited to this

[z] Eph. v. 8. [a] 1 Pet. i. 2. [b] Joh. xvii. 17. [c] 1 Cor. vi. 20.

happy state of saving inward light, and that is here to be understood as the means of this. These *Jews* that were called to the profession of the christian faith, to whom our apostle writes, were even in that called unto a light hid from the rest of their nation, and from many other nations in the world: but because the Apostle doth undoubtedly describe here the lively spiritual state of true believers, therefore this calling doth further import the effectual work of conversion, making the day-light of salvation, not only without, but within them, *the day-star to arise in their hearts*, as he speaks[d]. When the sun is arisen, yet if a man be lying fast in a dark prison, and in a deep sleep too, it is not day to him; he is not *called to light*, till some open the doors and awake him, and bring him forth to it. This God doth, in the calling here meant. That which is here termed, *calling*, in regard of the way of God's working with the soul, is in regard of the power of it, called a *rescuing*, and bringing forth of the soul; so the apostle St. Paul speaks of it[e], *Delivered from the power of darkness, and translated to the kingdom of his dear Son.* That delivering and translating is this *calling;* and it is from the *power of darkness*, a forcible power, that detains the soul captive: as there are *chains* of eternal *darkness* upon damned spirits, which shall never be taken off, wherein they are *said to be reserved to the judgment of the great day;* so there are chains of spiritual darkness upon the unconverted soul, that can be taken off by no other hand, but the powerful hand of God. He calls the sinner to *come forth*, and withal causes by the power of that his voice, the bolts and fetters to fall off, and enables the soul to *come forth*, into the light. It is an operative word that effects what it bids, as that in the creation, *He said, let there be light, and it was light.* To which the apostle hath reference, when he says, *God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath*

[d] 2 Pet. i. 19. [e] Col. i. 13.

shined into your hearts[f]. God calls man, he works with him indeed, as with a reasonable creature; but sure he likewise works as himself, as an Almighty Creator. He works strongly, and sweetly, with an Almighty easiness. One man may call another to this light; and if there be no more, he may call long enough to no purpose; as they tell of *Mahomet's* miracle that misgave, he called a mountain to come to him, but it stirred not. But his call that shakes and removes the mountains, doth in a way known to himself, turn and wind the heart which way he pleaseth. *The voice of the Lord is powerful and full of majesty*[g], If he speaks once to the heart it cannot chuse but follow him, and yet most willingly chuses that. The workings of grace (as oil to which it is often compared) do insensibly, and silently penetrate, and sink into the soul, and dilate themselves through it. That word of his own *calling*, disentangles the heart from all its nets (as it did the disciples) to follow Christ. That call that brought St. *Matthew* presently from his receipt of custom, puts off the heart from all its customs, and receipts too: makes it reject gains and pleasures, and all that hinders it, to go after Christ. And it is a call that touches the soul so, as the touch of *Elijah's* mantle, that made *Elisha* follow him. *Go back*, said he, *for what have I done unto thee?* yet he had done so much, as made him forsake all to go with him[h]. And this every believer is most ready to acknowledge, that knows what the rebellion of his heart was, and what his miserable love of darkness was; that the gracious, yet mighty call of God, was that, which drew him out of it, and therefore he willingly assents to that.

Which lead us to the *third* thing to be spoken of, namely, the end of this calling and state of christians, which is *to shew forth his praise*, who hath so mercifully, and so powerfully called them from so miserable to so happy an estate.

For 1. this is God's end in calling us, to commu-

[f] 2 Cor. iv. 6. [g] Psal. xxix. 4. [h] 1 Kings xix. 20.

nicate his goodness to us, that so the glory of it may return to himself. The highest agent cannot work but for the highest end; so that, as the apostle speaks, when God would confirm his covenant by an oath, *he sware by himself*, because he could swear by no greater, so in all things he must be the end of his own actions; because there is no greater, nor better end, yea none by infinite odds so great, or good; particularly in the calling and exalting a number of lost mankind to so great honour, and happiness, both in designing that great work and in performing it, he aims at the opening, and declaring of his *rich grace*, for the glory of it. As the Apostle St. *Paul* tells us once, and again[1].

2. As this is God's end, it ought to be ours, and therefore ours because it is his. And for this very purpose, both here and elsewhere, are we put in mind of it, that we may be true to his end, and intend it with him: this is his purpose in calling us, and therefore it is our great duty being so called, to declare his praises. All things and persons shall pay *this tribute;* even they that are most unwilling: but the happiness of his chosen is, that they are active in it, others are passive only. Whereas, the rest have his praise wrested from them, they do declare it chearfully, as the glorious angels do. As the gospel brings them glad tidings of peace from God, and declares to them that love and mercy that is in him, they smother it not, but proclaim it; they declare it, and set forth the glory of it, with their utmost power and skill.

There be in this two things, 1. Not only to speak upon all occasions to the advantage of his grace, but that the frame of their actions be such as doth tend to the exalting of God. And 2. That in those actions they do intend this end, or set up this for their aim.

1. Their words and actions being conformable to that high, and holy estate, to which they are called,

[1] Eph. i. 6, 12.

do commend, and praise their Lord, that hath called them to it. The virtues that are in them tell us of his virtues, as brooks lead us to their springs. Then *faith* glorifies God, when a christian can quietly repose, and trust on God, in a matter of very great difficulty, wherein there is no other thing to stay him but God alone, this declares, that there is strength enough in God that bears him up, that there must be in him that real abundance of goodness and truth that the word speaks of him, *Abraham believed, and gave glory to God*[k]. This is that which a believer can do, to declare the truth of God, he relies on it. *He that believes sets to his seal that God is true*[l]. So also their *holiness* is for his praise. Men hear that there is a God who is infinitely holy, but they can neither see him, nor his holiness; but when they perceive some lineaments of it in the faces of his children, which are in no others; this may convince them that its perfection, which must be somewhere, can be no where else, but in their heavenly Father. When these that are his peculiar plants bring forth the fruits of holiness, which naturally they yielded not, it testifies a supernatural work of his hand, that planted them, and the more they are fruitful the greater is his praise. *Herein* (says our Saviour[m],) *is your heavenly Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit.* Were it not the conscience of this duty to God, and possibly the necessity of their station, and calling, it may be, some christian had rather altogether lock up, and keep within him any grace he hath, than let it appear at all, considering some hazards he and it runs in the discovery; and it may be, could take some pleasure in the world's mistakes, and disesteem of him. But, seeing both piety, and charity requires the acting of graces in converse with men, that which hypocricy doth for itself, a real christian may, and should do for God.

2. The other thing mentioned as making up this rule, will give the difference; that not only, what

[k] Rom. iv. 20. [l] John iii. 33. [m] John xv. 8.

we speak and do, should be such as agrees with this end, but that in so speaking and doing, our eye be upon this end. That all our christian conversation, be directly intended by us, not to cry up our own virtues, but to glorify God, and his virtues, *to declare his praises who hath called us.*

Let your light, says our Saviour[n], *shine*, and *shine before men too*, that is not forbidden, yea it is commanded. But it is thus commanded, *let your light so shine before men, that they seeing your good works*, yourselves as little as may be, your works more than yourselves (as the sun gives us its light, and will scarce suffer us to look upon itself) *may glorify* whom? You? No, *but your Father which is in Heaven. Let your light shine*, it is given for that purpose, but let it shine always to the glory of the *Father of lights.* Men that seek themselves, may share in the same public kind of actions with you; but let your secret intention (which God eyes most) serve you. This is the seal and impression, that a sincere and humble christian sets upon all his actions, *the glory of God*: he useth all he hath, especially all his graces, to his praise that gives it; and is sorry he hath no more for this use; and is daily seeking after more, not to bring more esteem to himself, but more honour to God. It is a poor booty to hunt after that, namely, an airy vain breath of men. The best things in them, their solidest good, is altogether vanity. How much more that which is lightest and vainest in them. This is the mind, that is in every christian, in all his ways to deny himself, and be willing to abase himself to exhalt his master; to be of St. *Paul's* temper, that regarded not himself at all, honour, or dishonour, prison or liberty, life or death, content he was with any thing, so *Christ might be magnified*[o].

And as every godly mind must be thus affected, especially the ministers of the Gospel, they that are not only called with others, to partake of this mar-

[n] Mat. v. 16. [o] Phil. i. 20.

vellous light, but are in a special manner to hold it forth to others, how do pure affections become them, and ardent desires to promote his glory who hath so called them? A rush for your praise or dispraise of us, only receive Jesus Christ, and esteem highly of him, and it is enough. That is the thing we give to some of you. *We preach not ourselves* (says the Apostle) *but Christ Jesus the Lord*[p]. That is our errand, not to catch, either at base gain, or vain applause for ourselves, but to exalt our Lord Jesus, in the hearts of men. And to those that are so minded, there is a reward abiding them, of such riches, and honour, as they would be very loath to exchange for any thing to be had amongst men.

But, in his station, this is the mind of every one, that loves the *Lord Jesus*, most heartily to make a sacrifice of himself, and all he is, and hath; means, and esteem, and life, and all to his glory, that humbled himself so low, to exalt us to these dignities, to *make us kings and priests unto God.*

It is most just, seeing we have our *crowns* from him, and that he hath set them on our heads, that we take them in our hands, and throw them down *before his throne.* All our graces (if we have any) are his free gift, and are given as the rich garments of this spiritual priesthood, only to attire us, suitably for this spiritual sacrifice of his praises. As the costly vesture of the high priest under the law, was not appointed to make him gay for himself, but to decorate him for his holy service, and to commend as a figure of it, the perfect holiness, wherewith our great high priest *Jesus Christ* was cloathed. What good thing have we, that is not from the hand of our good God; and receiving all from him, and after a special manner spiritual blessings, is it not reasonable that all we have (but those spiritual gifts especially) should declare his praise, and his only? *David* doth not grow big with vain thoughts, and lift up himself, because God had lift him up; but

[p] 2 Cor. iv. 5.

cries out[q], *I will extol thee, because thou hast lifted me up.* The visible heavens, and all the beauty and the lights in them, speak nothing but his glory that framed them, as the Psalmist teacheth us[r], and shall not these spiritual lights, his *called ones*, whom he hath made lights so peculiarly for that purpose, these *stars in his right hand*, do it much more? Oh! let it be thus with us; the more he gives, be still the more humble, and let him have the return of more glory, and let it go entire to him: it is all his due, and in doing thus, we shall still grow richer; for where he sees the most faithful servant that purloins nothing, but improves all to his master's advantage, sure, him he will trust with most.

And as it is thus both most due to God, and most profitable for ourselves, in all to seek his praises, so it is the most excellent and generous intent, to have the same thought with God, the same purpose that is his, and to aim no lower than at his glory; whereas it is a base poor thing for a man to seek himself, far below that royal dignity that is here put upon christians, and that priesthood joined with it. Under the law, they that were squint-eyed were incapable of the priesthood[s], truly this squinting out to our own interest, looking aside to that (in God's affairs especially) so deforms the face of the soul, that it makes it altogether unworthy the honour of this spiritual priesthood. Oh! this is a large task, an infinite task. The several creatures bear their part in this; the sun says somewhat, and moon and stars, yea, the lowest have some share in it; the very plants and herbs of the field speak of God, and yet the very highest and best, yea, all of them together, the whole consort of Heaven and earth, cannot *shew forth all his praise* to the full. No, it is but a part, the smallest part of that glory which they can reach.

We all pretend to these dignities, in that we profess ourselves christians; but if we have a mind to

[q] Psal. xxx. 1. [r] Psal. xix. 1. [s] Levit. xxi. 20.

be resolved of the truth in this, (for many, many are deceived in it) we may, by asking ourselves seriously, and answering truly to this; 1*st*. Whether are my actions and the course of my life such, as give evidence of the grace of God, and so speak his praise? If not, sure I am not of this number that God hath thus called and dignified; and this (I fear) would degrade many. 2*dly*. If my life be somewhat regular and christian-like, yet whether do I in it all singly and constantly, without any selfish or sinister end, desire and seek the glory of God alone? Otherwise, I may be like this *chosen generation;* but I am not of them: and this out of doubt would make the number yet far less. Well, think on it, it is a miserable condition for men, either to be grossly staining and dishonouring the holy religion they profess, or in seeming to serve and honour God, to be serving and seeking themselves; it is the way to lose themselves for ever. Oh! it is a comfortable thing to have an upright mind, and to love God for himself, and *love seeks not its own things*[t]. They are truly happy that make this their work sincerely, though weakly, to advance the praises of their God in all things; and finding the great imperfection of their best diligence in this work here, are still longing to be in that state where they shall do it better.

Ver. 10. *Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*

THE love of God to his children is the great subject both of his word and of their thoughts, and therefore is it that his word (the rule of their thoughts and whole lives) speaks so much of that love; to that very end, that they may think much, and esteem highly of it, and walk answerably to it. This is the scope of St. *Paul's* doctrine to the *Ephesians*, and the top of his desires for them[u], and this

[t] 1 Cor. xiii. 5. [u] Eph. iii. 17.

is our apostle's aim here. As he begun with the Epistle, opposing their election in Heaven to their dispersion on earth, the same consideration runs through the whole of it. Here he is representing to them the great fruit of that love, that happy and high estate to which they are called in Christ; that the choosing of Christ, and believers, is as one act, and they as one entire object of it; one glorious temple, he the foundation and head corner-stone, and they the edifice; one honourable fraternity, he the king of Kings and great high priest, and they likewise through him made kings and priests, unto God the Father, a *royal priesthood*, &c. He the *light of the world*, and they through him, *children of light*. Now that this their dignity, which shines so bright in its own innate worth, may yet appear the more, the apostle here sets it off by a double opposition.

1. Of the misery under which others are, and also that misery under which they themselves were before their calling. And this being set on both sides, is as a dark shadowing round about their happiness here described, setting off the lustre of it.

1. Their former misery expressed in the former verse by darkness, is here more fully and plainly set before their view in these words; they are borrowed from the prophet [x], where, (as is usual with the prophets) he is raised up by the Spirit of God, from the temporal troubles, and deliverances of the *Israelites*, to consider and foretel that great restoration wrought by Jesus Christ, purchasing a new people to himself, made up both of *Jews* and *Gentiles* that believe: and therefore the prophecy is fit, and applicable to both; so that the debate is altogether needless, whether it concerns the *Jews* or *Gentiles*. For in its spiritual sense, as relating to the kingdom of Christ, it foretells the making the *Gentiles*, that were not before so, *the people of God*, and the recovery of the *Jews* likewise, who by their apostacies, and the captivities and dispersions which

[x] Hosea ii. 23.

came upon them, as just punishments of those apostacies, were degraded from the outward dignities they had, as the people of God, and withal were spiritually miserable and captives by nature, and so in both respects laid equal with the *Gentiles*, and stood as much in need of this restitution as they. St. *Paul* useth it concerning the calling of the *Gentiles*[y]. And here St. *Peter* writing as is most probable, particularly to the dispersed *Jews*, applies it to them, as being, in the very reference it bears to the *Jews*, truly fulfilled in those alone that were believers, faith making them a part of the true *Israel* of God, to which the promises do peculiarly belong, as the apostle St. *Paul* argues at large[z].

2. We have their present happiness; and this we also have here under a double expression, *they were not a people;* destitute of mercy; *not the people of God,* says the prophet; *not a people,* says our apostle; being not God's people, so base and miserable as not to be worthy of the name of a people at all, as it is taken[a].

There is a kind of being, a life that a soul hath by a peculiar union with God; and therefore in that sense the soul without God is dead, as the body is without the soul[b], yea, as the body separated from the soul, is not only a lifeless lump, but putrifies, and becomes noisome and abominable; thus the soul separated from God, is subject to a more loathsome and vile putrefaction[c]. So that men that are yet unbelievers, *are not*, as the *Hebrews* expressed death; and multitudes of them *are not a people,* but a heap of filthy carcases. Again, take our natural misery in the notion of a captivity, which was the judgment threatened against the *Jews* to make them not a people; therefore their captivity is often spoke of as a death by the prophets, and their reduction as their resurrection[d]. And as a captive people is civilly dead, as they speak, so a soul captive to sin and the

[y] Rom. ix. 25. [z] Rom. ix. [a] Deut. xxxii. 21.
[b] Eph. ii. 1. [c] Psal. xiv. 3. [d] Ezek. xxxvii.

prince of darkness is spiritually dead, wanting happiness and well-being, which if it never attain, it had better, for itself, not be at all. There is nothing but disorder and confusion in the soul without God, the affections hurrying it away tumultuously, as in a state of anarchy.

Thus captive sinners *are not, they are dead;* they want that happy being that flows from God to the souls that are united to himself, and consequently must want that society and union one with another, which results from the former, results from the same union that believers have with God, and the same being in him; which makes them truly worthy to be called a people, and particularly the people of God. His people are the only people in the world worthy to be called *a people;* the rest are but refuse and dross, although in the world's esteem, that judges by its own rules, and favour of itself, the people of God be as no body, no people, a company of silly creatures; yea, *we are made*, says the great Apostle, *as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things*[c], yet, in his account who hath chosen them, (who alone knows the true value of things) his people are *the only people*, and all the rest of the world as *nothing* in his eyes. He dignifies and beautifies them, and loves in them that beauty which he hath given them.

But under that term is not only comprized that new being of believers in each one of them apart; but that tie and union that is amongst them as *one people*, being incorporated together, and living under the same government and laws, without which a people are but as the beasts of the field, or the *fishes of the sea, and the creeping things that have no ruler over them*, as the prophet *Habbak.* i. 14. speaks. That regular living in society and union in laws and policy, makes *many men* to be *one people;* but the civil union of men in states and kingdoms, is nothing comparable to the mysterious union of the people of God with him, and one with another.

[c] 1 Cor. iv. 13.

That commonwealth hath a firmer union than all others. Believers are knit together in Christ as their head; not merely a civil or political head ruling them, but as a *natural head* enlivening them, giving them all one life. Men in other societies, though well ordered, yet are but as a multitude of trees, regularly planted indeed, but each hath his own root: But the faithful are all branches of one root, their *union* is so mysterious, that it is compared to the very union of Christ with his Father, as it is indeed the product of it[f].

People of God.] *I will say to them, thou art my people, and they shall say, thou art my God*[g]. That mutual interest and possession is the very foundation of all our comfort. He is the first chuser; he first says, *My people*, calls them so, and makes them to be so; and then they say, *My God*. It is therefore a relation that shall hold and shall not break, because it is founded upon his choice who changes not. The tenor of an external covenant with a people (as the *Jews* particularly found) is such, as may be broken by man's unfaithfulness, though God remain faithful and true: But the new covenant of grace makes all sure on all hands, and cannot be broken; the Lord not only keeping his own part, but likewise performing ours in us, and for us, and establishing us, that as he departs not from us first, so we shall not depart from him. *I will betroth thee to me*, says he there, *for ever*: It is an indissoluble marriage that is not in danger to be broke either by divorce or death.

My people.] There is a treasure of instruction and comfort wrapt up in that word, not only more than the profane world can imagine (for they indeed know nothing at all of it,) but more than they that are of that number are able to conceive, a deep unfathomable. *My people.* They his portion, and he is theirs. He accounts nothing of all the world beside them, and they of nothing at all beside him; for them he continues the world. Many and great are

[f] John. xvii. 21. [g] Hos. ii. 23.

the privileges of his people contained in that great charter, the holy Scriptures, and rich is that land where their inheritance lies; but all flows from this reciprocal relation, that *he is their God.* All his power and wisdom is engaged for their good; how great and many soever are their enemies, they may well oppose this to all, *he is their God.* They are sure to be protected and prospered, and in the end to have full victory. *Happy then is that people whose God is the Lord*[h].

Which had not obtained mercy.] *The mercies of the Lord* to his chosen are *from everlasting;* yet so long as his decree of mercy runs hid, and is not discovered to them in the effects of it, they are said *not to have* received or *obtained mercy;* and when it begins to act and work in their effectual calling, then they find it to be theirs. It was in a secret way moving forward towards them before, as the sun after midnight is still coming nearer to us, though we perceive not its approach till the dawning of the day.

Mercy.] The former word, *the people of God,* teaches us how great the change is that is wrought by the calling of God; it makes those *his people,* who were *not a people.* This word, *obtained mercy,* discovers the spring from whence it flows; and likewise teaches us; 1. How *free* it is; this is indeed implied in the words of the change, of *no people;* such as have no right to such a dignity at all, and in themselves no disposition for it; to be made *his people,* can be owing to nothing but free grace; such mercy as supposes nothing, and seeks nothing but misery in us, and works upon that. As it is expressed to have been very free to this people of the *Jews,* in chusing them before the rest of the world[i], so it is to the spiritual *Israel* of God, and to every one particularly belonging to that company. Why is it that he chuseth one of a family, and leaves another; but because it pleaseth him? He *blots out their transgressions for his own name's sake.*[k]. And, 2.

[h] Psal. xxxiii. 12. [i] Deut. vii. 7, 8. [k] Isa. xliii. 25.

As it is free mercy, so it is *tender mercy;* the word in the prophet signifies *tenderness*, or bowels of compassion, and such are the mercies of our God towards us[l]. The bowels of a father[m], and if you think not that tenderness enough, those of a mother, yea more than a mother[n]. 3. *It is rich mercy*, which delights to glorify itself in the greatest misery; and pardons as easily the greatest as the smallest of debts. 4. *A constant unalterable mercy*, a stream still running.

Now in both these the Apostle draws the eyes of believers to reflect on their former misery, and view it together with their present state. This is very frequent in the scriptures[o]. And it is of very great use; it works the soul of a christian to much humility and love, and thankfulness and obedience.

It cannot chuse but force him to abase himself and magnify the free grace and love of God, and this may be one reason why it pleaseth the Lord to suspend the conversion of many, for many years of their life, yea, to suffer some of them to stain those years with grievous and gross sins; that the riches and glory of his grace, and freeness of his choice may be the more legible both to themselves and others. Likewise those apprehensions of wrath due to sin, and sights of hell as it were, that he brings some unto, either at or after their conversion, make for this same end. That glorious description of the *New Jerusalem*[p], is abundantly delightful in itself, and yet the fiery lake spoke of there[q], makes all that is spoke of the other sound much the sweeter.

But, universally, all the godly have this to consider, that they *were strangers and enemies to God;* and let each of them think, whence was it, that I, a lump of the same polluted clay with those that perish, should be taken and purified and moulded by the Lord's own hand for a vessel of glory? No-

[l] Jer. xxxi. 20. [m] Psal. ciii. 13. [n] Isa. xlix. 15.
[o] Ezek. xvi. Eph. xxi. 1. 1 Cor. vi. 11, &c.
[p] Revel. xxi. 16, &c. [q] v. 8.

thing but free grace makes the difference; and where can there be love and praises, and service found to answer this? All is to be ascribed to the mercy, gifts, and calling of Christ. And his ministers, (as doth St. Paul) ascribe it *to his mercy that they faint not*[r].

But alas! we neither enjoy the comfort of this mercy as obtained, nor are grieved for wanting it, and stirred up to seek after it, if not yet obtained. What do you think? seems it a small thing in your eyes to be shut out from the presence of God, and to bear the weight of his wrath for ever, that you thus slight this mercy, and let it pass by you unregarded? or will that imagined obtaining divert you from the real pursuit of it? Will you be willingly deceived, and be your own deceivers in a matter of so great importance? You cannot think too highly of the riches of divine mercy; it is above all your thoughts; but remember and consider this, that there is a *peculiar people* of his own, to whom alone all the riches of it do belong.

And therefore, how great soever it is, unless you find yourselves of that number, you cannot lay claim to the smallest share of it. And you are not ignorant what is their character, what a kind of people they are, that have such a knowledge of God as himself gives; *they are all taught of God*, enlightned and sanctified by his Spirit, a holy people, as he is a holy God, such as have the riches of that his grace by which they are saved, in most precious esteem, and their hearts by it enflamed with his love; and therefore their thoughts taken up with nothing so much as studying how they may obey and honour him; rather chusing to displease all the world, than offend him; and accounting nothing too dear, yea nothing good enough to do him service. If it be thus with you, then you have indeed *obtained mercy*.

But if you be such as can wallow in the same puddle with the profane world, and take a share of

[r] 2 Cor. iv. 1.

their ungodly ways; or if, though your outward carriage be somewhat more smooth, you *regard iniquity in your hearts*, have your hearts ardent in the love and pursuit of the world, but frozen to God; if you have some bosom idol that you hide and entertain, and cannot find in your heart to part with some one beloved sin, whatsoever it is, for all the love that God hath manifested to man in the son of his love *Jesus Christ:* In a word, if you can please and delight yourself in any way displeasing unto God, (though his people, while they are here have spots, yet these are not the spots of his people that I am now speaking of,) I can give you no assurance that as yet you have obtained mercy: on the contrary, it is certain that *the wrath of God is yet abiding on you*, and if you continue in this state, you are in apparent danger of perishing under it. You are yet children of spiritual darkness, and in the way to utter and everlasting darkness. Know ye what it is to be destitute of this mercy? It is a woeful state, though you had all worldly enjoyments, and were in the top of outward prosperity, to be shut out from the mercy and love of God.

There is nothing doth so kindly work repentance, as the right apprehension of the mercy and love of God. The beams of that love are more powerful to melt the heart than all the flames of mount *Sinai*, all the threatnings and terrors of the law. Sin is the root of our misery; and therefore it is the proper work of this mercy, to rescue the soul from it; both from the guilt, and the power of it at once. Can you think there is any suitableness in it, that the peculiar people of God should despise his laws, and practise nothing but rebellions? That those in whom he hath magnified his mercy, should take pleasure in abusing it? and that he hath washed any with the blood of his Son, to the end that they may still *wallow again in the mire?* As if we were redeemed not *from* sin, but *to* sin: as if we should say, *We are delivered to do all these abominations*[a],

[a] Jer. vii. 10.

Oh! let us not dare thus to abuse and affront the free grace of God, if we mean to be saved by it: let as many as would be found amongst those that obtain mercy, walk as his people, whose peculiar inheritance is his mercy. And seeing this *grace of God hath appeared unto us*, let us embrace it, and let it effectually *teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts*[t].

And if you be persuaded to be earnest suitors for this mercy, and to fly into *Jesus*, who is the *true mercy-seat*, then be assured it is yours. Let not the greatest guiltiness scar you and drive you from it, but rather drive you the more to it; for the greater the weight of that misery is under which you lie, the more need you have of this mercy, and the more will be the glory of it in you. It is a strange kind of argument used by the Psalmist, and yet a sure one, it concludes well and strongly[u], *Lord pardon my iniquity, for it is great.* The soul pressed with the greatness of its sin lying heavy upon it, may make that very pressure an argument to press the forgiveness of it at the hands of free mercy; it is for *thy name sake*, that makes it strong, the force of the inference lies in that. Thou art nothing, and worse than nothing; true! but all that ever obtained this mercy were once so: they were *nothing* of all that which it hath made them to be; they were *not a people*, had no interest in God, were strangers to mercy, yea, *heirs of wrath:* yea, they had not so much as a desire after God, until this mercy prevented them, and showed itself to them, and them to themselves, and so moved them to desire it, and caused them to find it, caught hold on them and plucked them out of the dungeon. And it is unquestionably still the same, and fails not; ever expending, and yet never all spent, yea, not so much as at all diminished; flowing as the rivers from one age to another, serving each age in the present, and yet no whit the less to those that come after. He who exercises it is *The LORD for-*

[t] Tit. ii. 11, 12. [u] Psal. xxv. 7.

giving iniquity, transgression and sin to all that come unto him, and yet still keeping mercy for thousands that come after[x].

You that have obtained this mercy, and have the seal of it within you, it will certainly conform your hearts to its own nature, it will work you to a merciful compassionate temper of mind to the souls of others that have not yet obtained it. You will indeed, as the Lord doth, hate sin; but (as he doth likewise) you will pity the sinner. You will be so far from misconstruing and grumbling at the long suffering of God, as if you would have the bridge cut because you are over, (as St. *Augustin* speaks) that on the contrary, your great desire will be to draw others to partake of the same mercy with you, knowing it to be rich enough: and you will in your station use your best diligence to bring in many to it, both in love to the souls of men, and to the glory of God.

And withal, you will be still admiring and extolling this mercy as it is manifested unto you, considering what it is, and what you were before it visited you. The *Israelites* confessed, (at the offering of the first fruits[y],) to set off the bounty of God, *A Syrian ready to perish was my father;* they confessed their captivity in *Egypt:* but far poorer and baser is our natural condition, and far more precious is that land, to the possession of which this free mercy bringeth us.

Do but call back your thoughts, (you that have indeed escaped it) and look but into that pit of misery whence the hand of the Lord hath drawn you out, and you cannot miss to love him highly, and still kiss that gracious hand, even while it is scourging you with any affliction whatsoever; because it hath once done this for you, namely, plucked you out of everlasting destruction. As the thoughts of this change will teach us to praise[z], *He hath brought me up out of an horrible pit;* then follows, *He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto*

[x] Exod. xxxiv. 7. [y] Deut. xxv. 5. [z] Psal. xl. 23.

our God; not only *redeemed me from destruction,* but withal *crowned me with glory and honour*[a]. He not only doth forgive all our debts, and let us out of prison, but enriches us with an estate that cannot be spent, and dignifies us with a crown that cannot wither, made up of nothing of ours. These two will stretch and tune the heart very high, to consider from what a low estate grace brings a man, and how high it doth exalt him; in what a beggarly vile condition the Lord finds us, and yet doth not only free us thence, but puts such dignities on us; *Raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the dunghill, that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people*[b]. Or as *Joshua* the priest[c], *puts off the polluted garments, and sets on a fair mitre.* So those of this priesthood are dealt withal.

Now that we may be the deeper in the sense and admiration of this mercy, it is indeed our duty to seek earnestly after the evidence and strong assurance of it; for things work on us according to our notice and apprehensions of them, and therefore the more right assurance of mercy, the more love, and thankfulness, and obedience springs from it: therefore it is that the Apostle here represents this great and happy change of estate to christians, as a thing that they may know concerning themselves, and ought to seek the knowledge of, that so they may be duly affected with it. And it is indeed a happy thing to have in the soul an extract of that great archive and act of grace towards it, that hath stood in heaven from eternity. It is sure both a very comfortable and profitable thing to find and read clearly the seal of mercy upon the soul, which is holiness, that by which a man is marked by God, as a part of his peculiar possession that he hath chosen out of the world: and when we perceive anything of this let us look back, as here the Apostle would have us to do, and reflect how God has *called us from darkness to his marvellous light.*

[a] Psal. ciii. 4. [b] Psal. cxiii. 7, 8. [c] Zech. iii. 3, 4, 5.

Ver. 11. *Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.*

THE right spiritual knowledge that a christian hath of God and of himself, differenceth itself from whatsoever is likest to it, by the power and influence it hath upon the heart and life. And in this it hath the lively impression of that doctrine of the holy Scriptures that teaches it; wherein we still find throughout, that the high mysteries of religion are accompanied with practical truths, which not only agree with them, but are drawn out of them, and that not violently drawn, but naturally flowing from them, as pure streams from a pure spring. Thus in this epistle we find the Apostle intermixing his divine doctrine with most useful and practical exhortations[d], and in the beginning of this chapter again, and now in these words.

And upon this model ought both the ministers of the gospel to form their preaching, and the hearers their ear. Ministers are not to instruct only, or exhort only, but to do both. To exhort men to holiness and the duties of a christian life, without instructing men in the doctrine of faith, and bringing them to Jesus Christ, is to build a house without a foundation. And on the other side, to instruct the mind in the knowledge of divine things, and neglect the pressing of that practice and power of godliness, which is the undivided companion of true faith, is to forget the building that ought to be raised upon that foundation once laid, which is likewise a point of very great folly. Or if men laying that right foundation, do proceed to the superstructure of vain and empty speculations, it is but *to build hay and stubble*[e], instead of those solid truths that direct the soul in the way to happiness, which are of more solidity and worth than *gold and silver, and precious stones*[f]. Christ, and the doctrine that reveals him,

[d] Chap. i. v. 13. 22. [e] 1 Cor. iii. 12. [f] 1 Tim. iii. 9.

is called *the mystery of the faith*, and *v.* 16. *the mystery of godliness:* as Christ is the object of faith, so is he the spring and fountain of godliness. The Apostle having, we see, in his foregoing discourse unfolded the excellency of Christ, and of christians in him, proceeds here to exhort them to that pure and spiritual temper of mind and course of life, that becomes them as christians.

These hearers are to blame, and do prejudice themselves, that are attentive only to such words and discourse as stir the affections for the present, and find no relish in the doctrine of faith, and the unfolding of those mysteries that bear the whole weight of religion, so as to be the ground both of all christian obedience, and all exhortations and persuasives to it. These *temporary sudden* stirrings of the affections, without a right informed mind, and some measure of due knowledge of God in Christ, do no good. It is the wind of a word of exhortation that stirs them for the time against their lusts, but the first wind of temptation that comes, carries them away; and thus the mind is but tossed to and fro like a wave of the sea with all kind of winds, not being *rooted and grounded in the faith of Christ*, as it is[g], and so *in the love of Christ*[h], which are the conquering graces that subdue his lusts and the world unto a christian[i]. Love makes a man dead to himself and the world, and to *live to Christ that died for him.*

On the other part, they are no less, yea more to blame that are glad to have their minds instructed in the mysteries of the christian faith, and out of a mere natural desire to know, are curious to hear such things as inform them; but when it comes to the urging of holiness and mortifying their lusts, *these are hard sayings*, they had rather there were some way to receive Christ, and retain their lusts too, and to bring them to agreement. To hear of the mercies of God, and the dignities of his people in Christ, is very pleasing; but to have this follow upon

[g] Col. ii. 7. [h] Eph. iii. 17. [i] Joh. v. 4. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

it, *abstain from fleshly lusts*, this is an importune troublesome discourse: But it must be so for all that, these that will share in that mercy and happiness must *abstain from fleshly lusts*, &c.

Dearly beloved, I beseech you.] There is a faculty of reproving required in the ministry, and sometimes a necessity of very sharp rebukes, cutting ones. They that have much of the *Spirit of meekness*, may have *a rod* by them too, to use upon necessity: But sure the way of meekness is that they use most willingly, as the Apostle there implies. And out of all question, with ingenuous minds the mild way of sweet intreaties is very forcible; as oil that penetrates and sinks in insensibly, or, (to use that known resemblance) they prevail as the sun beams, that without any noise, made the traveller cast his cloak, which all the blustering of the wind could not do; but made him rather gather it closer, and bind it faster about him. We see the Apostles are frequent in this strain of intreaties, *I beseech you*[k]. Now this word of intreaty is strengthened much by the other, *Dearly beloved*. Scarce can the harshest reproofs, much less gentle reproofs, be thrown back, that have upon them the stamp of love. That which is known to come from love cannot readily but be so received too, and it is thus expressed, for that very purpose, that the request may be the more welcome, *Beloved*, it is the advice of a friend, one that truly loves you, and aims at nothing in it but your good. It is because I love you that I intreat you, and intreat you, as you love yourselves, *to abstain from fleshly lusts that war against your souls*. And what is our purpose when we exhort you to believe and repent, but that you may be happy in the forgiveness of your sins? Why do we desire you to embrace Christ? but that through him ye may have everlasting life.

Howsoever you take these things, it is our duty incessantly to put you in mind of them; and to do it with much love and tenderness of affection to your

[k] Rom. xii. 1.

souls; not only pressing you by frequent warnings, and exhortings, but also by frequent prayers and tears for your salvation.

Abstain.] It was a very wise abridgment that *Epictetus* made of philosophy, into those two words, *bear and forbear*. These are truly the two main duties that our Apostle recommends to his christian brethren, in this *Epistle*. It is one and the same strength of spirit that raises a man both above the troubles and pleasures of the world, and makes him despise and trample upon both.

We have first briefly to explain what these *fleshly lusts* mean; then to consider the exhortation of *abstaining* from them.

Unchaste desires are particularly called by this name indeed, but to take it for these only in this place, is doubtless too narrow. That which seems to be the true sense of it here, takes in all undue desires and use of earthly things, and all the corrupt affections of our carnal minds.

Now in that sense, these *fleshly lusts* comprehend a great part of the body of sin: All those three, the world's accursed Trinity[l], are under this name here of *fleshly lusts*. A crew of base imperious masters they are, to which the natural man is a slave; *serving divers lusts*[m]. Some are more addicted to the service of one kind of lust, some of another: But all are in this unhappy, that they are strangers, yea enemies to God; and as the brute creatures, servants to their flesh; either like the beasts of the field, as the covetous, with their eye still upon the earth; or voluptuous, and swimming in pleasures, as the fishes do in the sea, or like the fowls of the air, in vain ambition. All the *strifes* that are raised about these things, all *malice*, and *envyings*, all *bitterness* and *evil-speaking*[n], which are *works of the flesh*, and tend to the satisfying of *its wicked desires*, we are here requested to abstain from.

To abstain from these lusts is to hate and fly from

[l] 1 John ii. 16. [m] Tit. iii. 3. [n] Eph. iv. 31.

the very thoughts, and first motions of them; and if surprised by those, yet to kill them there, that they bring not forth: And to suspect ourselves even in those things that are not sinful, and to keep afar off from all inducements to those polluted ways of sin.

In a word, we are to abstain not only from the serving of our flesh in things forbidden, as unjust gain or unlawful pleasures, *&c.* but also from immoderate desire of, and delighting in any earthly thing, although it may be in itself lawfully, yea necessarily in some degree, desired and used; yea, to have any feverish pressing thirst after gain, even just gain, or after earthly delights, though lawful, is to be guilty of those fleshly lusts, and a thing very unbeseeming the dignity of a christian. To see them *that are cloathed in scarlet embracing a dunghill*[o], is a strange sight; therefore the Apostle having so cleared that immediately before, hath the better reason to require this of them, that they *abstain from fleshly lusts.*

Let their own slaves serve them; you are redeemed and delivered from them; a free people, yea kings, and suits it with royal dignity to obey vile lusts? You are priests consecrated to God, and will you tumble yourselves and your precious garments in the mire? It was a high speech of a heathen, *That he was greater, and born to greater things, than to be a servant to his body*; how much more ought he that is born again to say so? being born heir to *a crown that fadeth not away*[p].

Again, as the honour of a christian's estate is far above this baseness of serving his lusts, so the happiness and pleasantness of his estate, sets him above the need of the pleasures of sin. He said before, *If ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious, desire the sincere milk of the word*; desire that word wherein ye may taste more of his graciousness. And as that fitly urgeth the appetite's desire of the word, so it strongly persuades to this abstinence from fleshly

[o] Lament. iv. 4. [p] 1 Pet. v. 4.

lusts; yea to disdain and loath them. If you have the least experience of the sweetness of his love, if you have but tasted of the crystal river of his pleasures, the muddy puddle of the pleasures of sin will be hateful and loathsome to you; yea the very best earthly delights will be disrelished, and will seem unsavoury to your taste. The imbittering the breasts of the world to the godly by afflictions, doth something indeed to wean them from them; but the *breasts of consolation* that are given them in their stead, wean much more effectually.

The true reason why we remain servants to these lusts, some to one, some to another, is, because we are still strangers to the love of God, and those pure pleasures that are in him. Though the pleasures of this earth be poor and low, and most unworthy our pursuit, yet so long as men know no better, they will stick by those they have, such as they are. The philosopher gives this as the reason, why men are so much set upon sensual delights, because they know not the higher pleasures that are proper to the soul; and they must have it some way. It is too often in vain to speak to men in this strain, to follow them with the Apostle's intreaty, *I beseech you abstain from fleshly lusts*, unless they that are spoke to, be such as he speaks of in the former words, such *as have obtained mercy, and have tasted of the graciousness* and love of Christ, *whose loves are better than wine*[q]. Oh that we would seek the knowledge of this love, for *seeking* it we *should find it*, and finding it, no force would need to pull the delights of sin out of our hands, we should throw them away of our own accord.

Thus a carnal mind prejudices itself against religion, when it hears that it requires an abstinence from fleshly lusts, bereaves men of their mirth and delight in sin: But they know not that it is to make way for more refined and precious delights. There is nothing of this kind taken from us, but by a very advantageous exchange it is made up. *In the world*

[q] Cant. i. 2.

ye shall have affliction, but in me ye shall have peace. Is not want of the world's peace abundantly paid with peace in Christ? Thus fleshly lusts are cast out of the hearts of believers as rubbish and trash, to make room for spiritual comforts. We are barred *fellowship* with *the unfruitful works of darkness*, to the end *we may have fellowship with God and his Son Jesus Christ*[r]. This is to make men *eat Angels food* indeed[s], as was said of the manna. The serving of the flesh sets man below himself, down amongst the beasts, and the consolations of the Spirit and communion with God raise him above himself, and associate him with the Angels. But let us speak to the Apostle's own dissuasives from these lusts; 1. From the condition of christians; 2. From the condition of those lusts.

1. From the condition of christians, *as strangers*. These dispersed *Jews* were strangers scattered in divers countries[t], but here that is not intended; they are called strangers in that spiritual sense that agrees in common to all the saints. Possibly in calling them thus, he alludes to their outward dispersion, but means their spiritual alienation from the world, and interest in the *New Jerusalem*.

And this he uses as a very pertinent enforcement of his exhortation. Whatsoever others do, the serving of the flesh, and love of the world, is most incongruous and unseemly in you. Consider what you are; if you were citizens of this world, then you might drive the same trade with them, and follow the same lusts; but seeing you are chosen and called out of this world, and invested into a new society, made free of another city, and are therefore here but travellers passing through to your own country, it is very reasonable that there be this difference betwixt you and the world, that while they live as at home, your carriage be such as fits strangers, not glutting yourselves with their pleasures, not surfeiting upon their delicious fruits, as

[r] 1 John i. 3. 7. [s] Psal. lxxviii. 25. [t] Chap. i. v. 1.

some unwary travellers do abroad; but as wise strangers living warily and soberly, and still minding most of all your journey homewards, suspecting dangers and snares in your way, and so walking with holy fear, as the *Hebrew* word for a *stranger* imports.

There is indeed a miserable party even within a christian, the remainder of corruption, that is no *stranger* here; and therefore keeps friendship and correspondence with the world, and will readily betray him if he watch not the more: so that he is not only to fly *the pollutions of the world* that are round about him, and to chuse his steps that he be not ensnared from without; but he is to be upon a continual guard against the lust and corruption that is yet within himself, to curb and controul them, and give them resolute and flat refusals when they solicit him, and to stop up their essays and opportunities of intercourse with the world, and such things as nourish them, and so to do what he can to starve them out of the holds they keep within him, and to strengthen that new nature which is in him; to live and act according to it, though so he shall be sure to live as a stranger here, and a despised, mocked and hated stranger.

And it is not, on the whole, the worse that it be so. If men in foreign countries be subject to forget their own at any time, it is sure then, when they are most kindly used abroad, and are most at their ease; and thus a christian may be in some danger when he is best accommodated, and hath most of the smiles and caresses of the world; so that though he can never wholly forget his home that is above, yet his thoughts of it will be less frequent, and his desires of it less earnest, and it may be he may insensibly slide into its customs and habits, as men will do that are well seated in some other country: but by the troubles and unfriendliness of the world he gains this, that when they abound most upon him, he then feels himself a stranger, and remembers to behave as such, and thinks often with

much delight and strong desires on his own country, and the rich and sure inheritance that lies there, and the ease and rest he shall have when he comes thither.

And this will persuade him strongly to fly all polluted ways and lusts, as fast as the world follows them. It will make him abhor *the pleasures of sin*, and use the allowable enjoyments of this earth warily and moderately, never engaging his heart to them as worldlings do, but always keeping that free, free from that earnest desire in the pursuit of worldly things, and that deep delight in the enjoyment of them, which the men of the earth bestow upon them. There is a diligence in his calling and prudent regard of his affairs, not only permitted to a christian, but required of him. But yet in comparison of his great and *high calling* (as the apostle terms it) he follows all his other business with a kind of coldness and indifferency, as not caring very much which way they go, his heart is elsewhere. The traveller provides himself as he can of entertainment and lodging where he comes; if it be commodious, it is well; but if not, it is no great matter, if he find but necessaries, he can abate delicacies very well. For where he finds them in his way, he neither can, nor if he could, would chuse to stay there, though his inn were dressed with the richest hangings and furniture; yet it is not his home; he must and would leave it. That is the character of ungodly men, *they mind earthly things*[u], they are drowned in them over head and ears, as we say.

If christians would consider how little, and for how little a while they are concerned in any thing here, they would go through any state, and any changes of state, either to the better or the worse, with very composed equal minds, always moderate in their necessary cares, and never taking any care at all for the flesh, *to fulfil the lusts of it*[x].

Let them that have no better home than this world to lay claim to, live here as at home, and

[u] Phil. iii. 19. [x] Rom. xiii. 14.

serve their lusts, they that have all *their portion in this life*, no more good to look for than what they can catch here; let them take their time of the poor profits and pleasures that are here: but you that have your whole estate, all your riches and pleasures laid up in Heaven, and *reserved* there *for you;* let your hearts be there, and your *conversation* there. This is not the place of your rest, nor your delights, unless you would be willing to change, and to have *your good things here*, as some foolish travellers, that spend the estate they should live on at home, in a little while's braving it abroad amongst strangers. Will you with *prophane Esau, sell your birthright for a mess of pottage*[y], sell eternity for a moment, and such pleasures, as a moment of them is more worth than an eternity of the other?

2. The Apostle argues from the condition of their lusts. It were quarrel enough against *fleshly lusts, which war against the soul*, that they are so far below the soul, that they cannot content, no, nor at all reach the soul; they are not a suitable, much less a satisfying good to it. Although sin hath unspeakably abused the soul of man, yet its excellent nature and original does still cause a vast disproportion betwixt it, and all those gross base things of the earth that concern the flesh, and go no further. But this is not all, these fleshly lusts are not only no benefit to the soul, but they are its pernicious enemies; *they war against it;* and their war against it is all made up of stratagem and slight, for they cannot hurt the soul, but by itself. They promise it some contentment, and so gain its consent to serve them, and undo itself; they embrace the soul that they may strangle it. The soul is too much diverted from its own proper business, by the inevitable and incessant necessities of the body: and therefore it is the height of injustice and cruelty to make it likewise serve the extravagant and sinful desires of the flesh; so much time for sleep, and so much for eating and drinking and dressing, and undressing,

[y] Heb. xii. 16.

and to many the greatest part of the time that remains from these, is spent in labouring and providing for those. Look on the employments of most men; all the labour of the husbandmen in the country, and tradesmen in the city, the multitude of shops and callings, what is the end of them all, but the interest and service of the body? and in all these the immortal soul is drawn down to drudge for the mortal body, the *house of clay* wherein *it dwells*. And in the sense of this, those souls that truly know and consider themselves in this condition, do often groan under the burden and desire of the day of their deliverance. But the service of the flesh in the *inordinate lusts* of it, is a point of far baser slavery and indignity to the soul, and doth not only divert it from spiritual things for the time, but habitually indisposes it to every spiritual work, and makes it earthly and sensual, and so unfits it for heavenly things: where these lusts, or any one of them have dominion, the soul cannot at all perform any good; neither pray, nor hear, nor read the word aright: and in as far as any of them prevail upon the soul of a child of God, they do disjoint and disable it for holy things.

Although they be not of the grossest kind of lusts, but such things as are scarce taken notice of in a man, either by others, or by his own conscience, some irregular desires or entanglements of the heart, *yet these little foxes will destroy the vines*[z], they will prey upon the graces of a christian, and keep them very low: therefore it concerns us much to study our hearts, and be exact in calling to account the several affections that are in them; otherwise, even such as *are called of God*, and *have obtained mercy* (for such the apostle speaks to) may have such lusts within them, as will much abate the flourishing of their graces, and the spiritual beauty of the soul.

The godly know it well in their sad experience, that their own hearts do often deceive them, har-

[z] Cant. ii. 15.

bouring and hiding such things as deprive them much of that liveliness of grace, and those comforts of the Holy Ghost that otherwise they would be very likely to attain unto.

This *warring against the soul*, which expresses the mischief and hurtfulness of them, hath this under it, that these lusts, as breaches of God's law, do subject the soul to his wrath. So that by this the Apostle might well urge his point. Besides, that these lusts are unworthy of you: the truth is, if you christians serve your lusts, you kill your souls[a].

Consider when men are on their death-beds, and near their entering into eternity, what they then think of all their toiling in the earth, and serving of their own hearts and lusts in any kind; when they see that of all these ways, nothing remains to them, but the guiltiness of their sin, and the accusations of conscience, and the wrath of God.

Oh! that you would be persuaded to esteem your precious souls, and not wound them as you do, but *war for them*, against all those *lusts that war against* them. The soul of a christian is doubly precious, being, besides its natural excellency, ennobled by grace, and so twice descended of Heaven; and therefore it deserves better usage than to be turned into a scullion, to serve the flesh. The service of Jesus Christ is that which only fits it; it is only honourable for the soul to serve so high a lord, and its service is only due to him that bought it at so high a rate.

Ver. 12. *Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may, by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

THESE two things that a natural man makes least account of, are of all things in highest regard with a christian, his own soul, and God's glory; so

[a] Rom. viii. 13.

that there be no stronger persuasives to him in any thing than the interest of these two; and by these the apostle urgeth his present exhortation to holiness and blamelessness of life: for the substance of his advice or request in this and the former verse is the same; a truly *honest conversation* is only that which is spiritual, not defiled with *the carnal lusts and pollutions of the world.*

The abstaining from those lusts doth indeed comprehend not only the rule of outward carriage, but the inward temper of the mind; whereas this honest conversation doth more expressly concern our external deportment amongst men, as it is added, *honest among the Gentiles;* and so tending to the glory of God. So that these two are inseparably to be regarded, the inward disposition of our hearts, and the outward conversation and course of our lives.

I shall speak to the former first, as the spring of the latter, *Keep thine heart with all diligence.* For all depends upon that; *for from thence are the issues of life*[b]. And if so, then the regulating of the tongue, and eyes, and feet, and all will follow, as there it follows[c]: *Put away from thee a froward mouth.* That the impure streams may cease from running, the corrupt spring must be dried up. Men may convey them away in a close and concealed manner, making them run, as it were under ground, as they do filth under vaults and in ditches, *sentinas cloacas;* but till the heart be renewed and purged from base lusts, it will still be sending forth some way or other, the streams of iniquity. As *a fountain swelleth out,* or casteth forth her waters incessantly, *so she casteth out her wickedness,* says the prophet[d], of that very people and city that was called *holy,* by reason of the ordinances of God and profession of the true religion that was amongst them: and therefore it is the same prophet's advice from the Lord, *wash thine heart, O Jerusalem; how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee*[e]*?*

[b] Prov. iv. 23. [c] v. 24. [d] Jer. vi. 7. [e] Jer. iv. 14.

This is the true method, according to our Saviour's doctrine, *make the tree good, and then the fruits will be good;* not till then: For *who can gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles*[f]? Some good outward actions avail nothing, the soul being unrenewed; as you may stick some figs, or hang some clusters of grapes upon a thorn-bush, but they cannot grow upon it.

In this men deceive themselves, even such as have some thoughts of amendment; when they fall into sin, and are reproved for it, they say and possibly think so too, "I will take heed to myself, I will "be guilty of this no more;" and because they go no deeper, they are many of them ensnared in the same kind again. But however, if they do never commit that same sin, they do but change it for some other; as a current of waters, if you stop their passage one way, they rest not till they find another. The conversation can never be uniformly and entirely good, till the frame of the heart, the affections and desires that lodge in it, be changed. It is naturally *an evil treasure* of impure lusts, and must in some kind vent and spend what it hath within. It is to begin with the wrong end of your work to rectify the outside first, to smooth the conversation, and not first of all purge the heart. Evil affections are the source of evil speeches and actions. *Whence are strifes and fightings*[g]? (says St. *James,*) *Are they not from your lusts which war in your members*[g]? Unquiet unruly lusts within are the cause of the unquietnesses and contentions abroad in the world. One man will have his corrupt will, and another his, and thus they shock and justle one another; and by the cross encounters of their purposes, as flints meeting, they strike out these sparks that set all on fire.

So then, according to the order of the Apostle's exhortation, the only true principle of all good and christian conversation in the world, is the mortifying of all earthly and sinful lusts in the heart. While they have possession of the heart, they do

[f] Matth. vii. 16, 17. [g] Ja. iv. 1.

clog it, and straiten it towards God and his ways; it cannot walk constantly in them; but when the heart is freed from them, it is enlarged; and so, (as *David* speaks) the man is fitted not only to walk, but to *run the way of God's commandments*[h]. And without this *freeing of the heart*, a man will be at the best very uneven and incongruous in his ways; in one step like a christian, and in another like a worldling; which is an unpleasant and unprofitable way, not according to that word[i], *Thou hast set my feet as hinds feet;* set them *even*, as the word is, not only swift, but straight and even; and that is the thing here required, that the whole course and revolution of a christian's life be like himself: And that it may be so, the *whole body of sin*, and all the members of it, *all the deceitful lusts must be crucified.*

In the words there are three things; 1. One point of a christian's ordinary entertainment in the world is, *to be evil spoken of;* 2. Their good use of that evil, *to do the better for it;* 3. The good end and certain effect of their so doing, *the glory of God.*

I. One part of a christian's ordinary treatment in this world, *Whereas they speak against you as evil doers.*] This is in general the disease of man's corrupt nature, and argues much the baseness and depravedness of it: This propension to evil speaking one of another, either blotting the best actions with misconstructions, or taking doubtful things by the left ear, not chusing the most favourable, but, on the contrary, the very harshest sense that can be put upon them. Some men take more pleasure in the narrow eying of the true and real faults of men, and then speak of them with a kind of delight. All these kind of evil speakings are such fruits as spring from that bitter root of pride and self-love, which is naturally deep fastened in every man's heart: But besides this general bent to evil speaking, there is a particular malice in the world against those that *are born of God*, which must have vent in calumnies

[h] Psal. cxix. 32. [i] Psal. xviii. 33.

and reproaches. If this evil speaking be the hissing that is natural to the serpent's seed, sure, by reason of their natural antipathy, it must be breathed forth most against the *seed of the woman*, those that are one with Jesus Christ. If the *tongues* of the ungodly be *sharp swords* even to one another, they will *whet them* sharper than ordinary when they are to use them against the righteous, to wound their name. The evil tongue must be always burning, that is *set on fire of hell*, as St. *James* speaks; but against the godly it will be sure to be heated seven times hotter than it is for others. The reasons of this are; 1. Being naturally haters of God, and yet unable to reach him, what wonder is it if their malice vent itself against his image in his children, and labour to blot and stain that, all they can, with the foulest calumnies. 2. Because they are neither able nor willing themselves to attain unto the spotless holy life of christians, they bemire them, and would make them like themselves, by false aspersions; they cannot rise to the estate of the godly, and therefore they endeavour to draw them down to theirs by detraction. 3. The reproaches they cast upon the professors of pure religion, they mean mainly against religion itself, and intend by them to reflect upon it.

These evil speakings of the world against pious men professing religion, are partly gross falshoods invented without the least ground or appearance of truth; for the world being ever credulous of evil, especially upon so deep a prejudice as it hath against the godly, the falsest and most absurd calumnies will always find so much belief as to make them odious, or very suspected at least, to such as know them not. This is the world's maxim, *Lie confidently, and it will always do something;* as a stone taken out of the mire and thrown against a white wall, though it stick not there, but rebound presently back again, yet it leaves a spot behind it.

And with those kind of evil speakings were the primitive christians surcharged, even with gross and

horrible falshoods; as all know that know any thing of the history of those times, even such things were reported of them, as the worst of wicked men would scarce be guilty of. The devil, as witty as he is, makes use again and again of his old inventions, and makes them serve in several ages; for so were the *Waldenses* accused of inhuman banquetings and beastly promiscuous uncleanness, and divers things *not once to be named among christians*, much less to be practised by them: So that it is no new thing to meet with the impurest vilest slanders, as the world's reward of holiness, and the practice of pure religion.

Then again consider, how much more will the wicked insult upon the least *real blemishes* that they can espy amongst the professors of Godliness. And in this there is a threefold injury very ordinary; 1. Strictly to pry into, and maliciously to object against christians the smallest imperfections and frailties of their lives, as if they pretended and promised absolute perfection. They do indeed *exercise themselves* (such as are christians indeed) with St. *Paul, to keep a good conscience in all things towards God and men*[k]. They have a *regard unto all God's commandments*, as *David* speaks, they have a sincere love to God which makes them study the exactest obedience they can reach. And this is an imperfect kind of perfection, it is evangelical, but not angelical; 2. To impute the scandalous falls of some particular persons to the whole number. It is a very short incompetent rule, to make judgment of any one man himself by one action, much more to measure all the rest of the same profession by it; and they yet proceed further in this way of misjudging; 3. That they impute the personal failings of men to their religion, and disparage it because of the faults of those that profess it; which, as the ancients plead well, is the greatest injustice, and such as they would not be guilty of against their own *philosophers*. They could well distinguish be-

[k] Acts xxiv. 16.

twixt their doctrine and the manners of some of their followers, and thus ought they to have dealt with christians too. They ought to have considered their religion in itself, and the doctrine that it teacheth, and had they found it vitious, the blame had been just; but if it taught nothing but holiness and righteousness, then the blame of any unholiness or unrighteousness found amongst christians was to rest upon the persons themselves, that were guilty of it, and not to be stretched to the whole number of professors, much less to the religion that they professed. And yet this is still the custom of the world upon the least failing they can espy in the Godly, or such as seem to be so; much more with open mouth do they revile religion, upon any gross sin in any of its professors.

But seeing this is the very character of a profane mind, and the badge of the enemies of religion, beware of sharing in the least with them in it. Give not easy entertainment to the reports of profane or of mere civil men, against the professors of religion; they are undoubtedly partial, and their testimony may be justly suspected. Lend them not a ready ear to receive their evil-speakings, much less your tongue to divulge them, and set them further going: Yea, take heed that you take not pleasure in any the least kind of scoffs, against the sincerity and power of religion. And all of you that desire to walk as christians, be very wary, that you wrong not one another, and help not the wicked against you, by your mutual misconstructions and miscensures one of another. Far be it from you to take pleasure in hearing others evil spoken of, whether unjustly, or though it be some way deservedly; yet let it be alway grievous to you, and no way pleasing to hear such things, much less to speak of them. It is the devil's delight to be pleased with evil-speakings. The Syrian calls him an *Akal Kartza, Eater of slanders or calumnies.* They are a dish that pleases his palate, and men are naturally fond of his diet. In *Psal.* xxxv. 16. there

is a word that is rendered *mockers at feasts*, or *feasting-mockers;* that feasted men's ears at their meetings with speaking of the faults of others scoffingly, and therefore shared with them of their cakes, or feasts, as the word is; but to a renewed christian mind, that hath a new taste, and all its senses new; there is nothing more unsavoury, than to hear the defaming of others, especially of such as profess religion. Did *the law of love* possess our hearts, it would regulate our ear and tongue, and make them most tender of the name of our brethren; it would teach us the faculty of covering their infirmities, and judging favourably; taking always the best side and most charitable sense of their actions; it would teach us to blunt the fire-edge of our censures upon ourselves, our own hard hearts and rebellious wills within, that they might remain no more sharp against others, than is needful for their good.

And this would cut short those that are without, from a great deal of provisions of evil-speaking against christians that they many times are furnished with by themselves, through their uncharitable carriage one towards another. However this being the hard measure that they always find in the world, it is their wisdom to consider it aright, and to study that good which according to the Apostle's advice, may be extracted out of it, and that is the second thing to be spoken to.

II. Their good use of that evil, *Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles.*] As the sovereign power of drawing good out of evil resides in God, and argues his primitive goodness, so he teacheth his own children some faculty this way, that they may resemble him in it. He teacheth them to draw sweetness out of their bitterest afflictions, and increase of inward peace from their outward troubles. And as these buffetings of the tongue are no small part of their sufferings, so they reap no small benefit by them many ways; particularly

in this one, that they order their conversation the better, and walk the more exactly for it.

And this no doubt in divine providence is intended and ordered for their good, as are all their other trials. The sharp censures and evil speakings that a christian is encompassed with in the world, is no other than a hedge of thorns set on every side, that he go not out of his way, but keep straight on in it betwixt them, not declining *to the right-hand nor to the left;* whereas, if they found nothing but the favour and good opinion of the world, they might, as in a way unhedged, be subject to expatiate and wander out into the meadows of carnal pleasures that are about them, that would call and allure them, and often amuse them from their journey.

And thus it might fall out that christians would deserve censure and evil speakings the more, if they did not usually suffer them undeserved. This then turns into a great advantage to them, making them more answerable to those two things that our Saviour joins, to *Watch and pray*[l], to be the more vigilant over themselves, and the more earnest with God for his watching over them, and conducting of them, *Make my ways straight*, says *David, because of mine enemies*[m]. The word is, *my obssrvers*, or these that scan my ways, every foot of them, that examine them as a verse, or as a song of music; if there be but a wrong measure in them, they will not let it slip, but will be sure to mark it.

And if the enemies of the godly wait for their halting, shall not they scan their own paths themselves, that they may not halt? and examine them, to order them, as the wicked do to censure them; still depending wholly upon the Spirit of God as their guide, *to lead them into all truth*, and to teach them how *to order their conversation aright*, that it may be all of a piece, holy and blameless, and still like itself?

[l] Matth. xxvi. 41. [m] Psal. v. 8.

Honest.] Fair or beautiful: the same word doth fitly signify goodness and beauty: For that which is the truest and most lasting beauty, grows fresher in old age, as the Psalmist speaks of the righteous[n], as *trees planted in the house of God.* Could the beauty of virtue be seen, said a philosopher, it would draw all to love it. A christian holy conversation hath such a beauty, as when they that are strangers to it begin to discern it any thing right, they cannot chuse but love it; and where it begets not love, yet it silences calumny, or at least evinces its falshood.

The goodness or beauty of a christian's conversation consisting in symmetry and conformity to the word of God as its rule, he ought diligently to study that rule, and to square his ways by it; not to walk at random, but to apply that rule to every step at home and abroad, and to be as careful to keep the beauty of his ways unspotted, as those women are of their faces and attire, that are most studious of comeliness.

But so far are we that call ourselves christians from this exact regard of our conversation, that the most part not only have many foul spots, but they themselves, and all their ways, are nothing but defilement, all one spot, as our apostle calls them, *blots are they and spots*[o], and even they that are christians indeed, yet are not so watchful and accurate in all their ways as becomes; but stain their *holy profession* either with pride or covetousness, or contentions, or some other such like uncomeliness.

Let us all therefore resolve more to study this good and comely conversation the Apostle here exhorts to, that it may be such as *becometh the gospel of Christ*, as St. *Paul* desires his *Philippians*, i. 27. And if you live amongst profane persons, that will be to you as the unbelieving *Gentiles* were to these believing *Jews* that lived amongst them, traducers of you, and given to speak evil of you, and of re-

[n] 2 Psal. xcii. [o] Pet. ii. 13.

ligion in you, trouble not yourselves with many apologies and clearings, when you are evil spoken of, but let the tract of your life answer for you, your *honest* and *blameless conversation:* that will be the shortest, and most real and effectual way of confuting all obloquies. As when one in the schools was proving by a sophistical argument, that there could be no motion, the philosopher answered it fully and shortly, by rising up and walking. If thou wouldst pay them home, this is a kind of revenge not only allowed thee, but recommended to thee; be avenged on evil speakings by well-doing, shame them from it. It was a king that said, *It was kingly to do well and be ill spoke of.* Well may christians acknowledge it to be true, when they consider, that it was the lot of their king Jesus Christ; and well may they be content, seeing he hath made them likewise *kings*, (as we heard, *v.* 9) to be conformable to him in this too. This kingly way of suffering, to be unjustly evil spoken of, and still to go on in doing the more good, always aiming in so doing, (as our Lord did) at the glory of our heavenly Father, that is the third thing.

III. The good end or certain effect of this care recommended, *That they may glorify God in the day of their visitation.* He says not, they shall praise or commend you, but *shall glorify God.* What way soever this time, this *day of visitation* be taken, the effect itself is this, *They shall glorify God.* It is this the apostle still holds before their eye, and that upon which a christian doth willingly set his eye, and keep it fixed on it in all his ways; he doth not teach them to be sensible of their own esteem as it concerns themselves, but only as the glory of their God is interested in it. Were it not for this, a generous minded christian could set a very light rate upon all the thoughts and speeches of men concerning him, whether good or bad; and could easily drown all their mistakes in the conscience of the favour and approbation of his God. *It is a small thing for me to be judged of man,* or

the day of man, he that judgeth me is the Lord[p]. Man hath a day of judging, but it and his judgment with it, soon passes away; but God hath *his day*, and it and his sentence abideth for ever, as the apostle there adds, as if he should say, *I appeal to God.* But considering that the religion he professes, and the God whom he worships in that religion, are wronged by those reproaches, and that the calumnies cast upon Christians, reflect upon their Lord; this is the thing that makes him sensible, he feels on that side only, *the reproaches of them that reproach thee are fallen upon me*, says the Psalmist: and this makes a christian desirous, even to men to vindicate his religion and his God, without regard to himself; because he may say, the *reproaches of them that reproach* only *me, have fallen upon thee*[q].

This is his intent in the holiness and integrity of his life, that God may be glorified; this is the axis about which all *this good conversation* moves and turns continually.

And he that forgets this, let his conversation be never so plausible and spotless, knows not what it is to be a christian; as they say of the eagles, who try their young ones whether they be of the right kind or not, by holding them before the sun, and if they can look stedfastly upon it, they own them, if not, they throw them away. This is the true evidence of an upright and real christian, to have a stedfast eye on the glory of God, the *Father of Lights.* In all, *Let God be glorified*, says the christian, and that suffices: that is the sum of his desires; he is far from glorying in himself, or seeking to raise himself, for he knows that of himself he is nothing, but by the *free grace of God he is what he is.* "Whence any glorying to thee, rotten-"ness and dust? (says S. *Bern.*) whence is it to "thee if thou art holy? Is it not the Holy Spirit "that hath sanctified thee? if thou couldst work "miracles, though they were done by thy hand,

[p] 1 Cor. iv. 3. [q] Psal. lxix. 9.

"yet it were not by thy power, but by the power "of God."

To the end that my glory may sing praise unto thee, says *David*[r]. Whether his tongue, or his soul, or both. What he calls *his glory* he shews us; and what use he hath for it, namely, to give the Lord glory, to sing his praises, and that then it was truly *David's* glory when it was so employed, in giving glory to him, whose peculiar due glory is. What have we to do in the world as his creatures, once and again his creatures, his new creatures, *created unto good works*[s], but to exercise ourselves in those, and by those to advance his glory? that all may return to him, from whom all is, as the rivers run back to the sea from whence they came. *Of him, and through him*, and therefore, *for him are all things*, says the apostle[t]. They that serve base gods, seek how to advance and aggrandize them. The covetous man studies to make his *Mammon* as great as he can; all his thoughts and pains run upon that service, and so do the voluptuous and ambitious for theirs; and shall not they that profess themselves to be the servants of the only great and the only true God, have their hearts much more, at least, as much possessed with desires of honouring and exalting him? Should not this be their predominant design and thought? What way shall I most advance the glory of my God? How shall I that am engaged more than they all, set in with the Heavens and the earth, and the other creatures, to declare his excellency, his greatness, and his goodness?

In the day of visitation.] The beholding of your good works may work this in them, that they may be gained to acknowledge and embrace that religion and that God, which for the present they reject; but that it may be thus, they must be visited with that same light and grace from above, which hath sanctified you. This I conceive is the sense of this word, though it may be, and is taken divers other

[r] Psal. xxx. 12. [s] Eph. ii. 10. [t] Rom. xi. 36.

ways by interpreters. Possibly in *this day of visitation* is implied the clearer preaching of the gospel amongst those *Gentiles*, where the dispersed *Jews* dwell; and that when they should compare the light of that doctrine with the light of their lives, and find the agreement betwixt them, that might be helpful to their effectual calling, and so they might glorify God: but to the end that they might do thus indeed, along with the word of God, and the good works of his people, there must be a particular visiting of their souls by the Spirit of God. Your good conversation may be one good mean of their conversion: therefore this may be a motive to that; but to make it an effectual mean, this day of gracious visitation must dawn upon them, *the day spring from on high must visit them*, as it is [u].

Ver. 13. *Submit yourselves unto every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king, as supreme,*

14. *Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well.*

It is one of the falsest, and yet one of the commonest prejudices that the world hath always entertained against true religion, that it is an enemy to civil power and government. The adversaries of the *Jews* charged this fault upon their city, the then seat of the true worship of God [a]. The *Jews* charged it upon the preachers of the christian religion [b], as they pretended the same quarrel against Christ himself. And generally the enemies of the christians in the primitive times loaded them with the slander of rebellion and contempt of authority: therefore our apostle descending to particular rules of christian life, by which it may be blameless; and to silence calumny, begins with this, not only as a thing of prime importance in itself, but as particularly fit for those he wrote to, (being both *Jews* and

[u] Luke i. 78. [a] Ezra iv. 15. [b] Acts xvii. 7.

christians) for the clearing of themselves and their religion, *submit yourselves*, &c.

There are in the words divers particulars to be considered, all concurring to press this main duty of obedience to magistrates; not only as well consistent with true religion, but as indeed inseparable from it. Not to parcel out the words into many pieces, they may, I conceive, be all not unfitly comprised under these two, 1. The extent of this duty; 2. The ground of it.

1. The extent of the duty, *to all civil power*, of what kind soever, for the time received and authorized; there being no need of questioning what was the rise and original of civil power, either in the nature of it, or in the persons of those that are in possession of it. For if you will trace them quite through in the succession of ages, and narrowly eye their whole circle, there be few crowns in the world in which there will not be found some crack or other, more or less. If you look on those great monarchies in *Daniel's* vision, you see one of them built up upon the ruins of another; and all of them represented by terrible devouring beasts of monstrous shape. And whether the *Roman* empire be the fourth there, as many take it, or not; yet in the things spoken of that fourth, and the rest, it is inferior to none of them, enlarging itself by conquests in all parts of the world; and under it were the provinces to which this epistle is addressed; yet the apostle enjoins his brethren subjection and obedience to its authority.

Nor is it a question so to be moved, as to suspend or at all abate our obedience to that which possesses in the present where we live, what form of government is most just and commodious.

God hath indeed been more express in the officers and government of his own house, his church: but civil societies he hath left at liberty, in the chusing and modelling of civil government, though always indeed over-ruling their choice and changes in that, by the secret hand of his wise and powerful

providence. Yet he hath set them no particular rule touching the frame of it, only the common rules of equity and justice were to be regarded, both in the contriving and managing of government; and yet, though it be some way defective in both, they that be subject to it, are in all things lawful to submit to its authority, whether supreme or subordinate, as we have it here expressly, *Whether to the king as supreme*, namely, to the *emperor*, or to the governors sent *by him*, which though a judicious interpreter refers to God, and will not admit of any other sense, yet it seems most suitable both to the words, and to the nature of the government of those provinces, to take that word *to him*, as relating to the king; for the *them that are sent*, answers to the other, *the king as supreme*, and so is a very clear designment of the inferior governors of those times and places. And whatsoever was their end that sent them, and their carriage that were sent, that which the apostle adds, expresses the end for which they should be sent to govern, and at which they should aim in governing, as the true end of all government. And though they were not fully true to that end in their deportment, but possibly did many things unjustly, yet as God hath ordained authority for this end, there is always so much justice in the most depraved government, as is a public good, and therefore puts upon inferiors an obligation to obedience; and this leads us to consider,

2dly, The ground of this duty, *for the Lord's sake.*] Now the main ground of submitting to human authority, is the interest that divine authority hath in it; having both appointed civil government as a common good amongst men, and particularly commanded his people obedience to it, as a particular good to them, and a thing very suitable with their profession; it is *for the Lord's sake.* This word carries the whole weight of the duty, and is a counter-ballance to the former, which seems to be therefore on purpose so expressed that this may an-

swer it. Although civil authority, in regard of particular forms of government, and the choice of particular persons to govern, is but a human ordinance, or *man's creature*, as the word is; yet both the good of government, and the duty of subjection to it, is God's ordinance; and therefore, for *his sake submit yourselves.*

1. God hath in general instituted civil government for the good of human society, and still there is good in it. Tyranny is better than anarchy. *2dly.* It is by his providence that men are advanced to places of authority [c]; *3dly*, It is his command that obedience be yielded to them [d]. And the consideration of this ties a christian to all loyalty and due obedience; which being still *for the Lord's sake*, cannot hold in any thing that is against the Lord's own command; for then kings and rulers leave their station. Now the subjection here is, *be subject* to them, ὑποτάγητε, as it were in your rank, still in subordination to God; but if they go out of that even line, follow them not. They that obey the unlawful commands of kings, do it in regard to *their God*, no question; but that *their God is their belly*, or their ambition, or their avarice.

But not only ought the exercise of authority, and submission to it be in things just, and lawful in themselves; but the very purpose of the heart, both in command and obedience, should be *in the Lord*, and *for his sake.* This is the only straight, and only safe rule both for rulers, and for people to walk by. Would kings and the other powers of the world consider the supremacy and greatness of that king of whom they hold all their crowns and dignities, they would be no less careful of their submission and homage to him, than they are desirous of their people's submission to them.

I will not speak at all of their civil obligations to their people, and the covenant of justice that with good reason is betwixt them in the fundamental

[c] Psal. lxxv. 6, 7. Dan. iv. 25. John xix. 11.
[d] Rom. xiii. 1. Tit. iii. 1, &c.

constitutions of all well ordered kingdoms; nor meddle with that point of the dependence that human authority hath upon the societies of men over whom it is, according to which it is here called *man's ordinance* or *creature*, ἀνθρωπίνη κτίσις. This is a thing that the greatest and most absolute of princes cannot deny, that all their authority is dependent upon the great God, both as the author of it in the general, and the sovereign disposer of it to particular men, *giving the kingdoms of the earth to whom he will*[e]. And therefore he may most justly require obedience and fealty of them, that they *serve the Lord in fear;* and if they rejoice in their dignities over men, yet that they do it with *trembling*, in sense of their duty to God, and that they throw down their crowns at the feet of Christ, *the Lord's anointed.*

And to this they are the more obliged, considering that religion and the gospel of Christ doth so much press the duty of their people's obedience to them; so that they wrong both christianity and themselves very far, in mistaking it as an enemy to their authority, when it is so far from prejudicing it that it confirms it, and pleads for it. Sure they do most ingratefully *requite the Lord* and his Christ, when they say[f], *Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us.* Whereas the Lord binds the cords of kings and their authority fast upon their people; not the cords of tyranny indeed, to bind the subjects as beasts to be sacrifices to the passion of their rulers, but the cords of just and due obedience to their kings and governors. The Lord doth (as you see here) bind it upon all that profess his name; and strengthens it by the respect his people carry to himself; enjoining them, that for *his sake* they would obey their rulers. So that kings need not fear true religion, that it will ever favour any thing that can justly be called rebellion, but on the contrary still urges loyalty, and obedience, so that as they ought in duty, they may

[e] Dan. iv. 25. [f] Psal. ii. 3.

in true policy and wisdom befriend true religion, as a special friend to their authority; and hate that religion of *Rome* which is indeed rebellion, and that *mother of abominations* that makes the *kings of the earth drunk with her cup*[g], and makes them dream of increase of authority while they are truly on the losing hand. But besides that they owe their power to the advancement of Christ's kingdom, by so employing themselves, as to strengthen it, they do themselves good, they confirm their own thrones, when they erect his; as it was said of *Cæsar*, that by setting up *Pompey's* statue he settled and fastened his own.

But it is an evil too natural to men, to forget the true end and use of any good the Lord confers on them. And thus kings and rulers too often consider not, for what they are exalted; they think it is for themselves, to honour and please themselves, and not to honour God, and benefit their people, to encourage and reward the good, (as here it is) and punish the wicked: they are set on high, for the good of those that are below them, that they may be refreshed with their light and influence; as the lights of Heaven are set there in the highest parts of the world for the use and benefit of the very lowest. God set them in the firmament of Heaven, but to what end? *To give light upon the earth*[h]. And the mountains are raised above the rest of the earth, (not to be *places of prey* and robbery, as sometimes they are turned to be) but to send forth streams from *their springs into the vallies*[i], and make them fertile; the mountains and hills, greater and lesser rulers, higher and lower, are to send forth to the people the *streams of righteousness and peace*[k].

But it is the corruption and misery of man's nature, that he doth not know and can hardly be persuaded to learn, either how to command aright, or how to obey; and no doubt many of those that can

[g] Rev. xvii. 2. [h] Gen. i. 15. [i] Psal. civ. 10. [k] Psal. lxxii. 3.

see and blame the injustice of others in authority, would be more guilty that way themselves, if they had the same power.

It is the pride and self-love of our nature, that begets disobedience in inferiors and violence and injustice in superiors. That depraved humour that ties to every kind of government a propension to a particular disease; that makes royalty easily degenerate into tyranny, and the government of nobles into faction, and popular government into confusion.

As civil authority, and subjection to it, is the institution of God; so the peaceable correspondence of those two, just government, and due obedience, is the especial gift of God's own hand, and a prime blessing to states and kingdoms: and the troubling and interruption of their course is one of the highest public judgments, by which the Lord punishes oftentimes the other sins both of rulers and people. And whatsoever be the cause, and on which side soever be the justice of the cause, it cannot be looked upon, but as a heavy plague, and the fruit of many and great provocations, when kings and their people, that should be a mutual blessing and honour each to other, are turned into scourges one to another, or into a devouring fire, as it is in the parable[1], *Fire going forth from Abimelech to devour the men of Shechem, and fire from Shechem to devour Abimelech.*

Ver. 15. *For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.*

16. *As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.*

THIS continues the same reason of the same christian duty; if they will obey the Lord, then they must obey civil powers, for that is his will, and they will not deny their obligation to him, for they are his servants[a]. The words indeed are

[1] Judg. ix. 20. [a] v. 16.

more general than the former, but they relate chiefly in this place to the particular in hand, so that neither in that kind nor in any other they dishonour their profession, and abuse their liberty, mistaking it as an exemption from those duties to which it doth more straightly tie them. So then the point of civil obedience, and all other good conversation amongst men, is here recommended to christians, as agreeable to the will of God, and the most effectual clearing of their profession, and very agreeable to their christian liberty.

The will of God] This is the strongest and most binding reason that can be used to a christian mind, that hath resigned itself to be governed by that rule, to have *the will of God* for its law. Whatsoever is required of it upon that warrant, it cannot refuse; although it cross a man's own humour, or his private interest, yet if his heart be subjected to the will of God, he will not stand with him in any thing. This one word from God, *I will have it so*, silences all, and carries it against all opposition.

It were a great point if we could be persuaded to esteem duly of this. It were indeed all; it would make light and easy work in those things that go so hardly on with us, though we are daily exhorted to them. Is it the will of God that I should live soberly? then though my own corrupt will and my companions be against it, yet it must be so. Wills he that I forbear cursing and oaths, though it is my custom to use them? yet I must offer violence to my custom, and go against the stream of all their customs that are round about me, to obey his will, who wills all things justly and holily. Will he have my charity not only liberal in giving, but in forgiving, and real and hearty in both? will he have me *bless them that curse me, and do good to them that hate me, and love mine enemies?* Though the world counts it a hard task, and my own corrupt heart possibly finds it so, yet it shall be done; and not as upon unpleasant necessity, but willingly and chearfully, and with the more delight because it is dif-

ficult; for so it proves my obedience the more, and my love to him whose will it is. Though mine enemies deserve not my love, yet he that bids me love them, does; and if he will have this the touchstone to try the uprightness of my love to him, shall it fail there? No, his will commands me so absolutely, and he himself is so lovely, that there can be no body so unlovely in themselves, or to me, but I can love them upon his command, and for his sake.

But that it may be thus, there must be a renewed frame of mind, by which a man may renounce the world, and the forms of it, and himself, and his own sinful heart, and its way, to study and follow the only *good and acceptable and perfect will of God*[b], to move most in that line, not willingly declining to any hand, to have our whole minds taken up in searching it, and our whole hearts in embracing it: *Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is,* says the apostle[c], being about to exhort to particular duties, as our Apostle here is doing.

This is the task of a christian to understand his Lord's will, and with a practical understanding, that he may walk in all well pleasing unto God. Thus the Apostle likewise exhorts the *Thessalonians* pathetically[d], and adds[e], *This is the will of God, even our sanctification.* And then proceeds particularly against uncleanness and deceit, *&c.*

Let this then be your endeavour to have your wills crucified to whatsoever is sinful, yea to will outward indifferent things with a kind of indifferency; the most things that men are so stiff in, are not worth an earnest willing. In a word, it were the only happy and truly spiritual temper to have our will quite rooted out, and the will of God placed in its stead; to have no other will but his, that it might constantly, yea (so to speak) identically follow it in all things. This is the will of God, therefore it is mine.

That with well doing ye may put to silence the

[b] Rom. xii. 2. [c] Eph. v. 17. [d] 1 Epist. chap. iv. 1. [e] v. 3.

ignorance of foolish men.] Men void of religion have a higher sense of the duties of the second table, or of well doing towards men, than of those that have immediate relation to God; and therefore (as in other epistles) the apostle is here particular in these for the vindicating of religion to them that are without. Ignorance usually is loud and prattling, making a mighty noise, and so hath need of a *muzzle to silence it*, as the word φιμοῦν imports. They that were ready to speak evil of religion, are called *witless* or foolish men; there was perverseness in their ignorance, as the word ἀφρόνων intimates. And generally all kind of evil speakings, uncharitable censurings, do argue a foolish worthless mind whence they proceed; and yet they are the usual divertisement of the greatest part of mankind, and take up very much of their converse and discourse; which is an evidence of the baseness and perverseness of their minds. For, whereas those that have most real goodness, delight most to observe what is good and commendable in others, and to pass by their blemishes, it is the true character of vile unworthy persons (as scurvy flies sit upon sores) to skip over all the good that is in men, and fasten upon their infirmities.

But especially doth it discover *ignorance and folly*, to turn the failings of men to the disadvantage of religion, none can be such enemies to it but they that know it not, and see not the beauty that is in it. However the way to silence them we see is by *well doing*, that silences them more than whole volumes of apologies. When a christiau walks irreproveably, his enemies have no where to fasten their teeth on him, but are forced to gnaw their own malignant tongues. As it secures the godly thus to stop the lying mouths of foolish men, so it is as painful to them to be so stopt, as muzzling is to beasts, and punishes their malice.

And this is a wise christian's way, instead of impatient fretting at the mistakes or wilful miscensures of men, to keep still on in his calm temper of mind,

and upright course of life, and silent innocence: this as a rock breaks the waves into foam that roar about it.

As free.] This the apostle adds, lest any should so far mistake the nature of their christian liberty, as to dream of an exemption from obedience either to God, or to men for his sake, and according to his appointment.

Their freedom he grants, but would have them understand aright what it is. I cannot here insist at large on the spiritual freedom of christians, nor is it here needful, being mentioned only for the clearing of it in this point; but free *they* are, and they only that are partakers of this liberty. *If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed*[f], the rest are slaves to Satan, and the world, and their own lusts; as the *Israelites* in *Egypt*, working in the clay under hard task-masters.

Much discourse and much ink hath been spilt upon the debate of *free-will*, but truly all the liberty it hath, till the Son and his Spirit free it, is that miserable freedom the Apostle speaks of[g], *While ye were servants to sin, ye were free from righteousness.*

And as we are naturally subject to the vile drudgery of sin, so we are condemned to the proper *wages of sin;* which the apostle there tells us is *death*, according to the just sentence of the law. But our Lord Christ was anointed for this purpose, *to set us free*, both to work and to publish liberty, to *proclaim liberty to captives, and the opening of the prison-doors to them that are bound*[h]. Having paid our complete ransom, he sends his word as the message, and his Spirit to perform it effectually to set us free, to let us know it, and to bring us out of prison. He was bound and scourged as a slave or malefactor to purchase us this liberty, therefore ought it to be our special care, first to have part in it, and then to be like it, and *stand fast in it* in all points.

[f] Joh. viii. 36. [g] Rom. vi. 20. [h] Isa. lxi. 1.

But that we deceive not ourselves, as too many do that have no portion in this liberty, we ought to know that it is not to *inordinate walking* and licentiousness, as our liberty, that we are called; but *from them*, as our thraldom; we are not called from obedience, but to it. Therefore beware that you shuffle in nothing under this specious name of *liberty* that belongs not to it, make it not *a cloak of maliciousness*, it is too precious a garment for so base an use. Liberty is indeed Christ's livery that he gives to all his followers: but to live suitably to it, is not to live in wickedness or disobedience of any kind, but in obedience and holiness; you are called to be *the servants of God*, and that is your dignity and your liberty.

The apostles of this gospel of liberty gloried in this title, *The servants of Jesus Christ. David*, before that Psalm of praise for his victories and exaltations, being now settled on his throne, prefixes that as more honour than all these, *A psalm of David, the servant of the Lord*[i]. It is the only true happiness both of kings and their subjects to be *his subjects*, it is the glory of the angels to be his *ministring spirits*. The more we attain unto the faculty of serving him chearfully and diligently, the more still we find of this spiritual liberty, and have the more joy in it. As it is the most honourable, it is likewise the most comfortable and most gainful service, and they that once know it will never change it for any other in the world. Oh! that we could live as his servants, employing all our industry to do him service in the condition and place wherein he hath set us, whatsoever it is; and as faithful servants, more careful of his affairs than of our own, accounting it our main business to seek the advancement of his glory. *Happy is the servant whom the master when he cometh shall find so doing*[k].

[i] Psal. xviii. 1. [k] Matth. xxiv. 46.

Ver. 17. *Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the King.*

THIS is a precious cluster of divine precepts, the whole face of the heavens is adorned with stars, but they are of different magnitudes, and in some parts they are thicker set than in others. Thus is it likewise in the holy scriptures; and these are the two books that the Psalmist sets open before us[l], the heavens, as a choice piece of the works of God instructing us, and the word of God more full and clear than they. Here is a constellation of very bright stars near together. These words have very briefly, and yet not obscured by briefness, but withal very plainly, the sum of our duty towards God and men; to men both in general, *honor all men*, and in special relation, in their christian or religious relation, *love the brotherhood;* and a chief civil relation, *honor the king*. And our whole duty to God comprised under the name of *his fear*, is set in the middle betwixt these, as the common spring of all duty to men, and of all due observance of it, and the sovereign rule by which it is to be regulated.

I shall speak of them as they lie in the text. We need not labour about the connexion; for in such variety of brief practical directions, it hath not such place as in doctrinal discourses. The apostle having spoke of one particular, wherein he would have his brethren to clear and commend their christian profession, now accumulates these directions as most necessary, and after goes on to particular duties of servants, *&c.* But first observe in general, how plain and easy, and how few these things are that are the rule of our life. Here are no dark sentences to puzzle the understanding, nor large discourses and long periods to burden the memory; they are all plain; there *is nothing wreathed* nor distorted in them, עקש, as wisdom speaks of her instructions[m].

[l] Psal. xix [m] Prov. viii. 8.

And this gives check to a double folly amongst men, contrary the one to the other, but both, agreeing in mistaking and wronging the word of God. The one is of those that despise the word, and that doctrine and preaching that is conformable to it, for its plainness and simplicity; the other of those that complain of its difficulty and darkness. As for the first, they certainly do not take the true end for which the word is designed, that it is the law of our life; and it is mainly requisite in laws, that they be both brief and clear; that it is our guide and light to happiness; and if that which ought to be our *light, be darkness, how great will that darkness be*[n]*?*

It is true, (but I am not now to insist on this point) that there be dark and deep passages in scripture, for the exercise, yea, for the humbling, yea, for amazing and astonishing of the sharpest-sighted readers. But this argues much the pride and vanity of men's minds, when they busy themselves only in those, and throw aside altogether the most necessary, which are therefore the easiest and plainest truths in it. As in nature the commodities that are of greatest necessity, God hath made most common and easiest to be had, so in religion, such instructions as these now in our hands, that are both the most necessary and the plainest, are given us to live and walk by: and by giving up themselves wholly to the search of things that are more obscure, and less useful, men evidence that they had rather be learned than holy, and have still more mind to the *tree of knowledge*, than the *tree of life*. And in hearing of the word, are not they that are any whit more knowing than ordinary, still gaping after new notions? Something to add to the stock of their speculative and discoursing knowledge; loathing this daily manna, these profitable exhortations, and *requiring meat for their lust*. There is an intemperance of the mind as well as of the mouth; you would think it, and,

[n] Matt. vi. 23.

may be, not spare to call it, a poor cold sermon, that were made up of such plain precepts as these, *Honour all men; love the brotherhood; fear God; honour the king:* and yet this is the language of God; it is his way, this foolish despicable way by which he guides, and brings to heaven them that believe.

Again, we have others that are still complaining of the *difficulty and darkness* of the word of God and divine truths; to say nothing of *Rome's* doctrine, that talks thus, to excuse her sacrilege of stealing away the word from the people of God; (a senseless pretext, though it were true, because the word is dark of itself, should it therefore be made darker, by locking it up in an unknown tongue?) but we speak of the common vulgar excuse, that the gross ignorance and profaneness of many seeks to shroud itself under, that they are not learned, and cannot reach the doctrine of the scriptures. There be deep mysteries there indeed; but what say you to these things, such rules as these, *honour all men*, &c. Are such as these riddles, that you cannot know their meaning? rather do not all understand them, and all neglect them? Why set you not on to do these, and then you should understand more? *A good understanding have all they that do his commandments*, says the psalmist[o]; and as one said well, "The best way to "understand the mysterious and high discourse in "the beginning of St. *Paul's* Epistles, is to begin at "the practice of these rules and precepts that are in "the latter end of them." The way to attain to know more, is to *receive the truth in the love of it*, and to obey that you know. The truth is, such truths as these will leave you inexcusable, even the most ignorant of you; you cannot but know, you hear often, that you ought *to love one another*, and *to fear God*, &c. and yet you never apply yourselves in earnest to the practice of these things, as will appear to your own consciences, if they deal honestly with you in the particulars.

[o] Psm. cxi. 10.

Honour all men.] Honour in a narrower sense is not an universal due to all, but peculiar to some kind of persons. Of this the apostle speaks [p], *Render honour to whom honour is due*, and that in different degrees, to parents, to masters, and other superiors. There is an honour that hath, as it were, *Cæsar's* image and superscription on it, and so is particularly due to him; as here it follows, *honour the king*. But there is something that goes not unfitly under the name of honour, generally due to every man without exception; and it consists, as all honour doth, partly in inward esteem of them, partly in outward behaviour towards them. And the former must be the ground and cause of the latter.

We owe not the same measure of esteem to all. We may, yea we ought to take notice of the different outward quality, or inward graces and gifts of men; nor is it a fault to perceive the shallowness and weakness of men with whom we converse, and to esteem more highly those on whom God hath conferred more of such things as are truly worthy of esteem: but unto the meanest we do owe some measure of esteem, 1. Negatively; we are not to entertain despising disdainful thoughts of any, how worthless and mean soever. As the admiring of men, the very best, is a foolish excess on the one hand, so the total contemning of any, the very poorest, is against this rule on the other; for that *contemning of vile persons*, the Psalmist speaks of [q], and commends, is the dislike and hatred of their sin, which is their vileness, and not accounting them for outward respects worthy of such esteem, as their wickedness does as it were strip them of. 2. We are to observe and respect the smallest good that is in any. Although a Christian be never so base in his outward condition, in body or mind, of very mean intellectuals and natural endowments; yet they that know the worth of spiritual things, will esteem the grace of God that is in him, in the

[p] Rom. xiii. 8. [q] Psm. xv. 3.

midst of all those disadvantages, as men esteem a pearl, though in a rough shell. Grace carries still its own worth, though under a deformed body and ragged garments; yea, though they have but a small measure of that neither; yea, the very lowest degree of grace, as a pearl of the least size, or a small piece of gold, yet men will not throw it away: but, as they say, the least shavings of gold are worth the keeping. The *Jews* would not willingly tread upon the smallest piece of paper in their way, but took it up; for possibly, said they, the name of God may be on it. Though there was a little superstition in that, yet truly there is nothing but good religion in it, if we apply it to men. Trample not on any; there may be some work of grace there that thou knowest not of. The name of God may be written upon that soul thou treadest on; it may be a soul that Christ thought so much of, as to give his precious blood for it, therefore despise it not. Much more, I say, if thou canst perceive any appearance that it is such a one, oughtest thou to esteem it. Wheresoever thou findest the least trait of Christ's image, if thou lovest him, thou wilt honour it; or if there be nothing of this to be found in him thou lookest on, yet observe what common gift of any kind God hath bestowed on him, judgment or memory or faculty in his calling, or any such thing, for these in their degree are to be esteemed, and the person for them. And as there is no man so complete as to have the advantage in every thing, so there is no man so low and unworthy but he hath something wherein he is preferable even to these that in other respects are much more excellent; or imagine thou canst find nothing else in some men, yet honour thy own nature, esteem humanity in them, especially since humanity is exalted in Christ to be one with the deity, account of him as a man. And, along with this esteem goes, *3dly*, that general goodwill and affection that is due to men: whereas there be that do not only outwardly express, but in-

wardly bear more regard to some dog or horse that they love, than to poor distressed men; and in so doing, do reflect dishonour upon themselves, and upon mankind.

The outward behaviour wherein we owe honour to all, is nothing but a conformity to this inward temper of mind; for he that inwardly despiseth none, but esteemeth the good that is in the lowest, at least esteemeth them in that they are men, and loves them as such, will accordingly use no outward sign of disdain of any; he will not have a scornful eye, nor a reproachful tongue to move at any, not the meanest of his servants, nor the worst of his enemies; but on the contrary, will acknowledge the good that is in every man, and give unto all that outward respect that is convenient for them, and that they are capable of, and will be ready to do them good as he hath opportunity and ability.

But instead of walking by this rule of *honouring all men*, what is there almost to be found amongst men, but a perverse proneness to dishonour one another, and every man ready to dishonour all men, that he may *honour himself*, reckoning that what he gives to others is lost to himself, and taking what he detracts from others, as good booty to make up himself? Set aside men's own interest, and that common civility that for their own credit they use one with another, and truly there will be found very little of this real respect to others, flowing from obedience to God, and love to men, little disposition to be tender of their esteem and good name, and their welfare as of our own; for so the rule is, but we shall find mutual disesteem and defaming filling almost all societies.

And the bitter root of this iniquity is, that wicked accursed self-love that dwells in us. Every man is naturally his own grand idol, would be esteemed and honoured by any means, and to magnify that idol *self*, kills the good name and esteem of others in sacrifice to it. Hence is the narrow observing eye,

and broad speaking tongue upon any thing that tends to the dishonour of others; and where other things fail, the disdainful upbraiding of their birth or calling, or any thing that comes next to hand, serves for a reproach. And hence arises a great part of the jars and strifes amongst men, the most part being drunk with an over-weening opinion of themselves, and the unworthiest most; *A sluggard*, (says *Solomon*) *is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason*[r]; and not finding others of their mind, this frets and troubles them. They take the ready course to deceive themselves; for they look with both eyes on the failings and defects of others, and scarce give their good qualities half an eye; on the contrary, in themselves, they study to the full their own advantages; and their weaknesses and defects (as one says) they skip over, as children do the hard words in their lesson, that are troublesome to read; and making this uneven parallel, what wonder if the result be a gross mistake of themselves. Men miscount themselves at home, they reckon that they ought to be regarded, and their mind should carry it; and when they came abroad, and are crossed in this, this puts them out of all temper.

But the humble man, as he is more conformable to this divine rule, so he hath more peace by it; for he sets so low a rate upon himself in his own thoughts, that it is scarce possible for any to go lower in judging of him: And therefore, as he pays due respect to others to the full, and so gives no ground of quarrel that way, so he challenges no such debt to himself, and thus avoids the usual contests that arise in this. *Only by pride comes contention*, says *Solomon*[s]. A man that will walk abroad, throwing out his arms, in a crowded street, cannot chuse but be often justled; but he that contracts himself, passes through more easily.

Study therefore this excellent grace of humility, not the personated acting of it in appearance, which

[r] Prov. xxvi. 16. [s] Prov. xiii. 10.

may be a chief agent for pride, but true lowliness of mind, to be nothing in your own eyes, and content to be so in the eyes of others. Then will you obey this word; you will esteem as is meet of all men, and not be troubled though all men disesteem you. As this humility is a precious grace, it is the preserver of all other graces, and without it (if they could be without it) they were but as a box of precious powder carried in the wind without a cover, in danger to be scattered and blown away. If you would have honour, there is an ambition both allowed you, and worthy of you, whosoever you are[t]; φιλοτιμούμεθα; other honour, though it have the *Hebrew* name from *weight*, is all too light, and weighs only with cares and troubles.

Love the brotherhood.] There is a love, as we said, due to all, included under that word of *honouring all*, and a peculiar love to our christian brethren, which the apostle *Paul* calls by a like word, the *household of faith*[u].

Christian brethren are unitedby a three fold cord; two of them are common to other men, but the third is the strongest, and theirs peculiarly; their bodies are descended of the same man, and their souls of the same God; but their new life, by which they are most entirely brethren, is derived from the same God-man Jesus Christ; yea in him they are all one body, receiving life from him their glorious head, who is called *the first-born among many brethren*[v]. And as his unspeakable love was the source of this new being and fraternity, so doubtless it cannot but produce indissoluble love amongst them that are partakers of it. The spirit of love and concord is that *precious ointment that runs down from the head* of our great high priest, *to the skirts of his garment*. The life of Christ, and this law of love is combined, and cannot be severed. Can there be enmity betwixt those hearts that meet in him? Why do you pretend yourselves christians, and yet remain not only strangers to this

[t] Rom. ii. 7. 2 Cor. v. 9. [u] Gal. vi. 10. [v] Rom. viii. 29.

ficult; for so it proves my obedience the more, and my love to him whose will it is. Though mine enemies deserve not my love, yet he that bids me love them, does; and if he will have this the touchstone to try the uprightness of my love to him, shall it fail there? No, his will commands me so absolutely, and he himself is so lovely, that there can be no body so unlovely in themselves, or to me, but I can love them upon his command, and for his sake.

But that it may be thus, there must be a renewed frame of mind, by which a man may renounce the world, and the forms of it, and himself, and his own sinful heart, and its way, to study and follow the only *good and acceptable and perfect will of God*[b], to move most in that line, not willingly declining to any hand, to have our whole minds taken up in searching it, and our whole hearts in embracing it: *Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is,* says the apostle[c], being about to exhort to particular duties, as our Apostle here is doing.

This is the task of a christian to understand his Lord's will, and with a practical understanding, that he may walk in all well pleasing unto God. Thus the Apostle likewise exhorts the *Thessalonians* pathetically[d], and adds[e], *This is the will of God, even our sanctification.* And then proceeds particularly against uncleanness and deceit, *&c.*

Let this then be your endeavour to have your wills crucified to whatsoever is sinful, yea to will outward indifferent things with a kind of indifferency; the most things that men are so stiff in, are not worth an earnest willing. In a word, it were the only happy and truly spiritual temper to have our will quite rooted out, and the will of God placed in its stead; to have no other will but his, that it might constantly, yea (so to speak) identically follow it in all things. This is the will of God, therefore it is mine.

That with well doing ye may put to silence the

[b] Rom. xii. 2. [c] Eph. v. 17. [d] 1 Epist. chap. iv. 1. [e] v. 3.

ignorance of foolish men.] Men void of religion have a higher sense of the duties of the second table, or of well doing towards men, than of those that have immediate relation to God; and therefore (as in other epistles) the apostle is here particular in these for the vindicating of religion to them that are without. Ignorance usually is loud and prattling, making a mighty noise, and so hath need of a *muzzle to silence it*, as the word φιμοῦν imports. They that were ready to speak evil of religion, are called *witless* or foolish men; there was perverseness in their ignorance, as the word ἀφρόνων intimates. And generally all kind of evil speakings, uncharitable censurings, do argue a foolish worthless mind whence they proceed; and yet they are the usual divertisement of the greatest part of mankind, and take up very much of their converse and discourse; which is an evidence of the baseness and perverseness of their minds. For, whereas those that have most real goodness, delight most to observe what is good and commendable in others, and to pass by their blemishes, it is the true character of vile unworthy persons (as scurvy flies sit upon sores) to skip over all the good that is in men, and fasten upon their infirmities.

But especially doth it discover *ignorance and folly*, to turn the failings of men to the disadvantage of religion, none can be such enemies to it but they that know it not, and see not the beauty that is in it. However the way to silence them we see is by *well doing*, that silences them more than whole volumes of apologies. When a christiau walks irreproveably, his enemies have no where to fasten their teeth on him, but are forced to gnaw their own malignant tongues. As it secures the godly thus to stop the lying mouths of foolish men, so it is as painful to them to be so stopt, as muzzling is to beasts, and punishes their malice.

And this is a wise christian's way, instead of impatient fretting at the mistakes or wilful miscensures of men, to keep still on in his calm temper of mind,

and upright course of life, and silent innocence: this as a rock breaks the waves into foam that roar about it.

As free.] This the apostle adds, lest any should so far mistake the nature of their christian liberty, as to dream of an exemption from obedience either to God, or to men for his sake, and according to his appointment.

Their freedom he grants, but would have them understand aright what it is. I cannot here insist at large on the spiritual freedom of christians, nor is it here needful, being mentioned only for the clearing of it in this point; but free *they* are, and they only that are partakers of this liberty. *If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed*[f], the rest are slaves to Satan, and the world, and their own lusts; as the *Israelites* in *Egypt*, working in the clay under hard task-masters.

Much discourse and much ink hath been spilt upon the debate of *free-will*, but truly all the liberty it hath, till the Son and his Spirit free it, is that miserable freedom the Apostle speaks of[g], *While ye were servants to sin, ye were free from righteousness.*

And as we are naturally subject to the vile drudgery of sin, so we are condemned to the proper *wages of sin;* which the apostle there tells us is *death*, according to the just sentence of the law. But our Lord Christ was anointed for this purpose, *to set us free*, both to work and to publish liberty, to *proclaim liberty to captives, and the opening of the prison-doors to them that are bound*[h]. Having paid our complete ransom, he sends his word as the message, and his Spirit to perform it effectually to set us free, to let us know it, and to bring us out of prison. He was bound and scourged as a slave or malefactor to purchase us this liberty, therefore ought it to be our special care, first to have part in it, and then to be like it, and *stand fast in it* in all points.

[f] Joh. viii. 36. [g] Rom. vi. 20. [h] Isa. lxi. 1.

But that we deceive not ourselves, as too many do that have no portion in this liberty, we ought to know that it is not to *inordinate walking* and licentiousness, as our liberty, that we are called; but *from them*, as our thraldom; we are not called from obedience, but to it. Therefore beware that you shuffle in nothing under this specious name of *liberty* that belongs not to it, make it not *a cloak of maliciousness*, it is too precious a garment for so base an use. Liberty is indeed Christ's livery that he gives to all his followers: but to live suitably to it, is not to live in wickedness or disobedience of any kind, but in obedience and holiness; you are called to be *the servants of God*, and that is your dignity and your liberty.

The apostles of this gospel of liberty gloried in this title, *The servants of Jesus Christ. David*, before that Psalm of praise for his victories and exaltations, being now settled on his throne, prefixes that as more honour than all these, *A psalm of David, the servant of the Lord*[i]. It is the only true happiness both of kings and their subjects to be *his subjects*, it is the glory of the angels to be his *ministring spirits*. The more we attain unto the faculty of serving him chearfully and diligently, the more still we find of this spiritual liberty, and have the more joy in it. As it is the most honourable, it is likewise the most comfortable and most gainful service, and they that once know it will never change it for any other in the world. Oh! that we could live as his servants, employing all our industry to do him service in the condition and place wherein he hath set us, whatsoever it is; and as faithful servants, more careful of his affairs than of our own, accounting it our main business to seek the advancement of his glory. *Happy is the servant whom the master when he cometh shall find so doing*[k].

[i] Psal. xviii. 1. [k] Matth. xxiv. 46.

lished these intimations of his justice, and hath threatened to punish men if they transgress, to the end they may fear and not transgress: so that not to look upon them thus, and not to be affected with them answerably to their intendment, were a very grievous sin; a slight and disregard put upon the words of the great God.

2dly. Of all others, the children of God have the rightest and clearest knowledge of God, and the deepest belief of his word, and therefore they cannot chuse but be afraid, and more afraid than all others, to fall under the stroke of his hand. They know more of the greatness, and truth, and justice of God than others, and therefore they fear when he threatens. *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee*, (says *David*) *and I am afraid of thy judgments*[e]: yea, they tremble when they hear the sentence against others, or see it executed upon them; it moves them when they see public executions; *Knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade men*, says St. *Paul*[f]; and they cry out with *Moses*[g], *Who knows the power of thine anger, even according to thy fear so is thy wrath.* It is not an imagination nor invention that makes men fear more than they need; his wrath is as terrible as any that fears it most can apprehend, and beyond that: So that this doth not only consist with the estate of the saints, but is their very character *to tremble at the word* of their Lord. The rest neglect what he says, till death and judgment seize on them; but the godly know and believe, that *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*[h].

And though they have firm promises, and *a kingdom that cannot be shaken*, yet they have still this *grace by which they serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear;* even in this consideration, that *our God*, even he that is ours by peculiar covenant, *is a consuming fire*[i].

But indeed together with this, yea, more than

[e] Psm. cxix. 120. [f] 2 Cor. v. 11. [g] Psm. xc. 11.
[h] Heb. x. 31. [i] Heb. xii. 28, 29.

with this, they are persuaded to fear the Lord, by the sense of his great love to them, and by the power of that love that works in them towards him, and is wrought in them by his. *They shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days*[k]. In those days his goodness shall manifest itself more than before, the beams of his love shall break forth more abundantly in the days of the gospel, and shall beat more directly and hotter on the hearts of men, and then they shall fear him more, because they shall love him more.

This fear agrees well both with faith and love, yea, they work it. Compare *Psm.* xxxi. 23, with *Psm.* xxxiv. 9, and that same *Psm.* xxxiv. *v.* 8, with *v.* 9, and *Psm.* cxii. *v.* 1. with *v.* 7. The heart touched with the load-stone of divine love, trembles still with this godly fear, and yet looks fixedly by faith to that star of *Jacob*, Jesus Christ, who guides it to the haven of happiness.

The looking upon God in the face of Jesus Christ, takes off that terror of his countenance that drives men from him; and in the smiles of his love that appear through Christ, there is such a power as unites their hearts to him, but *unites* them so, as to *fear his name*, as the Psalmist's prayer is[l], He *puts such a fear in their hearts* as will not cause them depart from, yea, causes that they *shall not depart from him*[m].

And this is the purest and highest kind of godly fear, that springs from love; and though it excludes not the consideratian of wrath, as terrible in itself, and some fear of it, yet it may surmount it; and doubtless where much of that love possesses the heart, it will sometimes drown the other consideration, so that it shall scarcely be perceptible at all, and will constantly set it aside, and persuade a man purely for the goodness and loveliness of God, to

[k] Hos. iii. 5. [l] Psm. lxxxvi. 11. [m] Jer. xxxii. 40.

fear to offend him, though there were no interest at all in it of a man's own personal misery or happiness.

But do we thus fear the Lord our God? What mean then our oaths, and excesses, and uncleanness, our covetousness, and generally our unholy and unchristian conversation? This fear would make men tremble, so as to shake them out of their profane customs, and to shake their beloved sins out of their bosoms. The knowledge of the holy one causes fear of him[n].

But alas! we know him not, and therefore we fear him not. Knew we but a little of the great majesty of God, how holy he is, and how powerful a punisher of unholiness, we should not dare to provoke him thus. He *can kill both body and soul, and cast them into hell*, as our Saviour tells us, *Matth.* x. 28. and he will do so with both, if we will not fear him, because he can do so; and it is told us that we may fear, and so may not feel this heavy wrath. A little lively spiritual knowledge would go far and work much, which a great deal, such as ours is, doth not. Some such word as that of *Joseph* would do much, being engraven on the heart, *Shall I do this evil, and sin against God*[o]? It would make a man be at no more liberty to sin in secret than in public; no, not to dispense with the sin of his thoughts, more than of the openest words or actions. If some grave wise man did see our secret behaviour and our thoughts, should we not look more narrowly to them, and not suffer such rovings and follies in ourselves? Sure therefore we forget God's eye, which we could not, if we thought of it aright, but should respect it more, than if all men did see within us.

Nor is this only the main point to be pressed upon the ungodly, but the children of God themselves have much need to be put in mind of it, and to increase in it. How often do they abuse the indulgence of so loving a Father, and have not their

[n] Prov. ix. 18. [o] Gen. xxxix. 9.

thoughts so constantly full of him, are not *in his fear* (as *Solomon* advises) *all the day long*[p], but many times slip out of his directing hand, and wander from him, and do not so deeply fear his displeasure, and so watch over all their ways as becomes them; and keep close by him, and wait on his voice, and obey it constantly, and are not so humbled and afflicted in their repentings for sin as this fear requires, but in a slight and superficial degree. They offer much lip-labour, which is but dead service to the living God. These are things, my beloved, that concern us much, and that we ought seriously to lay to heart; for even they that are freed from condemnation, yet if they will walk fearlessly and carelessly at any time, he hath ways enough to make them smart for it: and if there were no more, should it not wound them deeply, to think how they requite so great, so unspeakable love?

Honour the king.] This was the particular that the Apostle pressed and insisted on before, and here he repeats it, as a special duty of the second table, and a vindication of religion, which is wrongfully blamed in this point; but of this before.

This is out of question in the general, only in the measure and rule of it is the difference; and sure they cannot possibly be satisfied, that are so drunk with power as to admit of none at all; no measure nor rate for it, no banks nor channel for those rivers, the hearts and wills of kings, to run in, but think, that if they like to run over all, they may.

This is such a wild conceit, as destroys both all law of reason in human societies, and all religious obligement to the laws of God. For the qualification and measure, I shall mention no other but that in the text, that it be always regulated by this, that here goes before it, *the fear of God*; that we never think of any such obedience and honour due to kings as crosseth *that fear* that is due to God. Let kings and subjects, and all know, that they are absolutely bound

[p] Prov. xxiii. 17.

to this. It is spoke to kings [q], *Serve the Lord in fear.* And to all men [r], *Fear before him all the earth, for he is great and greatly to be praised, he is to be feared above all gods.* What is man in respect of him? Shall a worm, *whose breath is in his nostrils*, stand in competition with the everliving God? Shall an earthen *potsheard strive with his Maker? Let the potsheards strive with the potsheards of the earth* [s]? Let them work one against another, and try which is hardest, and so they shall often break each other; but *woe to him that striveth with his Maker.* There is nothing there but certain perishing. As we conclude in the question with *Rome*, of the honour due to saints and angels; honour let them have, and good reason but not divine honour; not God's peculiar: so in this, *Give to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's;* but withal still, *Give to God the things that are God's* [t].

But it is a miserable estate of a kingdom, when debates on this head arise and increase; and their happiness is, when kings and people concur to honour God: *For those that honour him, he will honour; and whosoever despises him shall be lightly esteemed* [v].

[q] Psm. ii. 11. [r] Psal. ix. 6. [s] Isa. xlv. 9. [t] Matt. xxii. 21. [v] 1 Sam. ii. 30.

Ver. 18, *Servants be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.*

19, *For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully.*

20, *For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently; this is acceptable with God.*

THY word (says the Psalmist) *is a light to my feet, and a lamp to my paths.*[a] Not only a light to please his eyes, by the excellent truths and comforts that are in it, but withal a lamp to direct his feet in the precepts and rules of life that it gives, to inform and delight his mind, to order his course. That philosopher was deservedly commended that drew knowledge most this way, and therefore was said to have brought philosophy from the clouds to dwell amongst men, calling it from empty speculations to a practical strain. Thus we are taught in spiritual knowledge by the word of God. The Son, the eternal Word, when he came to dwell with men, and so brought life, and wisdom, and all blessings from the heavens down unto them, taught them both by his doctrine and perfect example, how to walk; and his apostles do conformably to this pattern aim at this in their holy writings, joining with the mysteries of faith those rules of life that show men the straight way to happiness.

And as it is spoken of the largeness of Solomon's wisdom, that *he spoke of all trees, from the cedar in Lebanon, to the hyssop that grows out of the wall,*[b] so in this we may see the perfection of the holy Scriptures, that they give those directions that are needfull to all ranks and sorts of men. They speak not only of the duties of kings, how they ought to behave themselves on their thrones, and the duty of

[a] Psa. cxix. 105. [b] 1 Kings iv. 33.

their subjects to them in that dignity, and how ministers and others ought to carry in the *house of God;* but they come into private houses, and give œconomic rules for them; teaching parents and children, and masters, yea, and servants, how to acquit themselves one to another. Thus here, *servants be subject to your masters.*

As this is a just plea for all the people of God, that they have right to the use of this book, being so useful for all sorts, and that they ought not to be barred it; so it is a just plea against a great part of those that bar themselves the use of it, through slothfulness and earthly mindedness, seeing it is so contempered, that there may be many things, yea, all the main things in it profitable for all, fitted to the use of the lowest estate and lowest capacities of men. Yea, it takes (as we see) particular notice of their condition; stoops down to take the meanest servant by the hand, to lead him in the way to heaven; and not only in that part of it, which is the general way of christians, but even in those steps of it that lay within the walk of their particular calling, as here, teaching not only the duties of a christian, but of a *christian servant.*

Obs. 1. The Scriptures are a depth that few can wade far into, and none can wade through, (as those waters,[a]) but yet all may come to the brook and refresh themselves with drinking of the streams of its living water, and go in a little way, according to their strength and stature. Now this (I say) may be spoken to our shame, and I wish it might shame you to amendment; that so many of you either use not the Scriptures at all, or in using, do not use them; turn over the leaves, and it may be run through the lines, and consider not what they advise you. Masters learn your part, and servants too hearken what they say to you, for they pass not you by, they vouchsafe to speak to you too, but you vouchsafe not to hear them, and observe their voice. How

[a] Ezek. lxvii. 5.

can you think that the reading of this book concerns you not, when you may hear it address such particular directions to you? Wisdom goes not only to the gates of palaces, but to the common gates of the cities, and to the public high-ways, and calls to the simplest that she may make them wise. Besides that you dishonor God, you prejudice yourselves; for does not that neglect of God and his word justly procure the disorder and disobedience of your servants towards you, as a fit punishment from his righteous hand, although they are unrighteous, and are procuring further judgment to themselves in so doing: And not only thus is your neglect of the word a cause of your trouble by the justice of God, but in regard of the nature of the word, that if you would respect it, and make use of it in your houses, it would teach your servants to respect and obey you, as here you see it speaks for you; and therefore you wrong both it and yourselves, when you silence it in your families.

Obs. 2. The Apostle having spoken of subjection to public authority, adds this of subjection to private domestic authority. It is a thing of much concernment, the right ordering of families; for all other societies, civil and religious, are made up of these. Villages, and cities, and churches, and common-wealths, and kingdoms, are but a collection of families; and therefore such as these are, for the most part, such must the whole societies predominantly be. One particular house is but a very small part of a kingdom, yet the wickedness and lewdness of that house, be it but of the meanest in it, as of servants one or more; and though it seem but a small thing, yet goes in to make that heap of sin that provokes the wrath of God, and draws on public calamity.

And this particularly, when it declines into disorder, proves a public evil: when servants grow generally corrupt and disobedient, and unfaithful, though

they be the lowest part, yet the whole body of a common-wealth cannot but feel very sensibly the evil of it; as a man does when his legs and feet grow diseased, and begin to fail him.

We have here, 1. Their duty. 2. The due extent of it. 3. The right principle of it.

1st, Their duty, *Be subject.* Keep your order and station under your masters, and that *with fear*, and inward reverence of mind and respect to them; for that is the very life of all obedience. Then their obedience hath in it, diligent doing, and patient suffering; both these are in that word, *be subject.* Do faithfully to your utmost that which is entrusted to you, and obey all their just commands, for action indeed goes no further; but suffer patiently even their unjust rigors and severities. And this being the harder part of the two, and yet a part that the servants of those times bore, many of them being more hardly and slavishly used than any with us, (especially those that were christian servants under unchristian masters) therefore the Apostle insists most on this, and this is the extent of the obedience here required, that it be paid to all kind of masters, *not to the good only, but also to the evil;* not only to obey, but to suffer, and suffer patiently, and not only deserved, but even wrongful and unjust punishment.

Now because this particular concerns servants, let them reflect upon their own carriage, and examine it by this rule; and truly the greatest part of them will be found very unconformable to it, being either closely fraudulent and deceitful, or grosly stubborn and dissobedient, abusing the lenity and mildness of masters, or murmuring at their just severity: so far are they from the patient endurance of the least undue word of reproof, much less of sharper punishment, either truly, or in their opinion undeserved. And truly if any that profess religion dispense with themselves in this, they mistake the matter very much; for it ties them more, whether chil-

dren or servants, to be most submissive and obedient even to the worst kind of parents and masters, *always in the Lord,* not obeying any unjust command; though they may and ought to suffer patiently (as it is here) their unjust reproofs or punishments.

But on the other side, this does not justify, nor at all excuse the unmerciful austerities, and unbridled passions of masters; it is still a perverseness and crookedness in them, as the word is here, σκολιοῖς, and must have its own name, and shall have its proper reward from the sovereign Master and Lord of all the world. But this is the second branch.

2. There is also the due extent of this duty, namely, *to the froward.* It is a more deformed thing to have a distorted crooked mind, or a froward spirit, than any crookedness of the body. How can he that hath servants under him expect their obedience, when he cannot command his own passion, but is a slave to it? And unless much conscience of duty possess servants (more than is commonly to be found with them) it cannot but work a master into much disaffection and disesteem with them, when he is of a turbulent spirit, a *troubler of his own house,* embittering his affairs and commands with rigidness and passions, and ready to take things by that side that may offend and trouble him, thinking his servant slights his call, when he may as well think he hears him not, and upon every slight occasion, real or imagined, flying out into reproachful speeches, or proud threats, contrary to the apostle St. Paul's rule; which he sets over against the duty of servants, *Forbearing threatening, knowing that your Master also is in Heaven, and that there is no respect of persons with him:*[a] think therefore, when you shall appear before the judgment-seat of God, that your carriage shall be examined, and judged as theirs; and think, that though we regard those differences much of masters and servants, they are nothing with God, they vanish away in his presence.

[a] Eph. vi. 9.

Consider *who made thee to differ:* might he not have made your stations just contrary with a turn of his hand, and made thee the servant, and thy servant the master? But we willingly forget those things that should compose our mind to humility and meekness, and blow them up with such fancies as please and feed our natural vanity, and make us somebody in our own account.

However, that christian servant that falls into the hands of a froward master will not be beaten out of his station and duty of obedience by all the hard and wrongful usage he meets with, but will take that as an opportunity of exercising the more obedience and patience, and will be the more cheerfully patient, because of his innocence, as the apostle here exhorts.

Men do indeed look sometimes upon this as a just plea for impatience, that they suffer unjustly, which yet is very ill logic; for, as the philosopher said, "Would any man, that frets because he suffers unjustly, wish to deserve it, that he might be patient?" Now to hear them, they seem to speak so, when they exclaim, that the thing that vexeth them most, is, they have not deserved any such thing as is inflicted on them: truly desert of punishment may make a man more silent upon it, but innocence right considered makes him more patient. Guiltiness stops a man's mouth indeed in suffering: but sure it doth not quiet his mind, on the contrary, it is that which mainly disturbs and grieves him, it is the sting of suffering, as sin is said to be of death.[a] And therefore, when there is no guilt, the pain of sufferings cannot but be much abated; yea, the Apostle here declares, that to suffer undeservedly, and withal patiently, is glorious to a man, and acceptable to God. It is commendable indeed to be truly patient even in deserved sufferings; but the deserving them tarnishes the lustre of that patience, and makes it look more like constraint, which is the Apostle's

[a] Cor. xv. 56.

meaning, preferring spotless suffering much before it: and that is indeed the true glory of it, that it pleaseth God; so that it is rendered in the close of the 20th verse for the other word of *glory* in the beginning of it; it is a pleasing thing in God's eyes, and therefore he will thank a man for it, as the word is, χάρις παρὰ θεῷ. Though we owe all our patience under all kind of afflictions as a duty to him, and though that grace is his own gift; yet he hath obliged himself by his royal word, not only to accept of it, but to praise it, and reward it in his children. Though they lose their thanks at the world's hands, and be rather scoffed and taunted in all their doings and sufferings, it is no matter; they can expect no other there, but their *reward is on high*, in the sure and faithful hand of their Lord.

How often do men work earnestly, and do and suffer much for the uncertain wages of glory and thanks amongst men? and how many of them fall short of their reckoning? either dying before they come to that state where they think to find it, or not finding it where they looked for it, so do but live to feel the pain of their disappointment. Or if they do attain their end, such glory and thanks as men have to give them, what amounts it to? Is it any other but a handful of nothing, the breath of their mouths, and themselves much like it, a vapour dying out in the air? The most real thanks they give, their solidest rewards, are but such as a man cannot take home with him; if they go so far with him, yet at furthest he must leave them at the door, when he is to enter his everlasting home. All the riches and palaces and monuments of honor that he had, and that are erected to him after death, as if he had then some interest in them, reach him not at all Enjoy them who will, he does not, *he hath no portion of all that is done under the sun;* his own end is to him the end of the world.

But he that would have abiding glory and thanks, must turn his eye another way for them. All men

desire glory, but they know neither what it is, nor how it is to be sought. He is upon the only right bargain of this kind, *whose praise* (according to St. Paul's word) *is not of men, but of God*[a]. If men commend him not, he accounts it no loss, and no gain if they do; for he is bound for a country where that coin goes not, and whither he cannot carry it; and therefore he gathers it not. That which he seeks in all, is, that he may be approved and *accepted of God*[b], whose thanks is no less to the least of those he accepts, than a crown of unfading glory; not a poor servant that fears his name, and is obedient and patient for his sake, but shall be so rewarded.

There be some kind of graces and good actions that men (such as regard any grace) take special notice of, and commend highly, such as are of a magnific and remarkable nature, as martyrdom, or doing or suffering for religion in some public way. There be again other obscure graces, that if men despise not, yet they esteem not much: as meekness, gentleness and patience under private crosses, known to few or none; and yet these are of great account with God, and therefore should be so with us. These are indeed of more universal use; whereas the other are but for high times, as we say, for rare occasions: these are every one's work, but few are called to the acting of the other. And the least of them shall not lose their reward, in whose person soever, as St. Paul tells us, speaking of this same subject. *Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free*[c].

This is the bounty of that great Master we serve: for what are we, and all we can do, that there should be a name of a reward to it? Yet he keeps all in reckoning; not a poor lame prayer, not a tear, nor a sigh poured forth before him, shall be lost. Not any cross from his own hand immediately, or com-

[a] Rom. ii. 29. [b] 2 Cor. v. 9. [c] Eph. vi. 8.

ing through mens hands, that is taken, what way soever it come, as out of his hand, and carried patiently, yea and welcomed, and embraced for his sake, but he observes our so entertaining of it. Not an injury that the meanest servant bears christianly, but goes upon account with him, and he sets them so, as that they bear much value through his esteem, and way of reckoning them, though in themselves they are all less than nothing; as a worthless counter stands for hundreds or thousands, according to the place you set it in. Happy they that have to deal with such a Lord, and be they servants or masters, are vowed servants to him. *When he comes, his reward shall be with him*[a].

The 3d thing is, the principle of this obedience and patience, *for conscience towards God.*

It imports the knowledge of God, and of his will in some due measure, and a conscientious respect unto him and his will so known, taking it for their only rule in doing and suffering. We may observe here,

1. That this declares to us the freeness of the grace of God in regard to men's own quality, that he doth often bestow the riches of his grace upon persons of mean condition. It is supposed here, that this conscience of God, the saving knowledge and fear of his name, is to be found in servants: therefore the apostle takes them within the address of his letter amongst those that are *elect, according to the foreknowledge of God*[b]. And sharers of those dignities he mentions[c], *a chosen generation.* The honor of a spiritual royalty may consist with the meanness of a servant; and this grace may be conferred upon the servant, and denied to the master, as is here supposed: it may fall out that a perverse crooked minded master may have a servant uprightly minded, being endued with a tender respectful conscience towards God; and thus the Lord counteracts

[a] Rev. xxii. 12 [b] 1 Pet. i. 2. [c] chap. ii. 9.

the pride of man, and sets off the lustre of his own free grace. He hath all to chuse on, and yet chuses there, where men would least imagine it [a]

2. Grace finds a way to exert itself in every estate where it is, and regulates the soul on the particular duties of that estate. If it find a man high or low, a master, or a servant, it requires not a change of his station, but works a change on his heart, and teaches him how to live in it. The same spirit that makes a Christian master, pious, and gentle, and prudent in commanding, makes a Christian servant faithful and obsequious, and diligent in obeying. A skilful engraver makes you a statue indifferently of wood, or stone, or marble, as they are put into his hand; and grace forms a man to a christian way of walking in any estate. There is a way for him in the meanest condition to glorify God, and to adorn the profession of religion; no estate so low, as to be shut out from that, and a right informed, and right affected conscience towards God shews a man that way, and causes him to walk in it. As the astrologers say, that the same stars that made *Cyrus* to be chosen king amongst the armies of men, when he came to be a man, made him to be chosen king amongst the shepherd's children, when he was a child. Thus grace will have its proper operation in every estate.

In this men readily deceive themselves, they can do any thing well in imagination, better than the real task that is in their hands. They presume that they could do God good service in some place of command, that serve him not as becomes in that which is by far the easier, the place of obeying, wherein he hath set them; they think if they had the ability and opportunities that some men have, they would do much more for religion, and for God than they do, and yet do nothing, but spoil a far lower part than that, which is their own, and is given them to stu-

[a] Matt. xi. 25. 1 Cor. i. 27.

dy and act aright in. But our folly, and self ignorance abuses us; it is not our part to chuse what we should be, but to be what we are to his glory, that gives us to be such: be thy condition never so mean, yet thy conscience towards God, if it be within thee, will find it self work in that. If it be little that is entrusted to thee, in regard of thy outward condition, or any other way, *be thou faithful in that little*, as our Saviour speaks, and thy reward shall not be little, *he shall make thee ruler over much.*[a]

3. As a corrupt mind debaseth the best and most excellent callings and actions, so the lowest are raised above themselves, and ennobled by a spiritual mind A magistrate or minister, though their calling and employments be high, may have low intentions, and draw down their high calling to these low intentions; they may seek themselves, and self ends, and neglect God. And a sincere christian may elevate his low calling by this conscience of God, observing his will, and intending his glory in it. An eagle may fly high, and yet have its eye down upon some carrion on the earth; even so a man may be standing on the earth, and on some low part of it, and yet have his eye upon heaven and be contemplating it. That which one man cannot at all see in another, is the very thing that is most considerable in their actions, namely, the principle whence they flow, and the end to which they tend. This is the form and life of actions, that by which they are earthly or heavenly. Whatsoever be the matter of them, the spiritual mind hath that alchemy indeed, of turning base metals into gold, earthly employments into heavenly. The handy-work of an artisan, or servant that regards God, and eyes him, even in that work, is much holier than the *prayer of an hypocrite*; and a servant's enduring the private wrongs and harshness of a froward master, bearing it patiently for the conscience of God, is more accep-

[a] Matt. xxv. 23.

table to God, than the sufferings of such, as may endure much for a public good cause, without a good and upright heart.

This habit and posture of the heart towards God, the Apostle St. Paul presses much upon servants [a], as being very needful to allay the hard labour, and harsh usage of many of them. There is no pill so bitter, but respect and love to God will sweeten it. And this is a very great refreshment and comfort to a christian in the mean estate of a servant, or other labouring men, that they may offer up their hardship and bodily labour, as a sacrifice to God, and say, "Lord, this is the station wherein thou hast set me in this world, and I desire to serve thee in it. What I do is for thee, and what I suffer I desire to bear patiently and cheerfully for thy sake, in submission and obedience to thy will."

For conscience.] In this there is, 1. A reverent compliance with God's disposal, both in allotting to them that condition of life, and particularly chusing their master for them; though possibly not the mildest and pleasantest, yet the fittest for their good. Their is much in the firm believing of this, and hearty submitting to it: for we would naturally rather carve for ourselves, and shape our own estate to our mind, which is a most foolish, yea, an impious presumption, as if we were wiser than he that hath done it; and as if there were not as much, and, it may be, more possibility of true contentment, in a mean, than in a higher condition. The master's mind is often more toiled than the servant's body. But if our condition be appointed us, at least we would have a voice in some qualifications and circumstances of it; as in this, if a man must serve, he would wish willingly that God would allot him a meek gentle master; and so in other things. If we must be sick, we would be well accommodated, and not want helps; but to have sickness, and want means and friends for our help, this we cannot think of with-

[a] Eph. vi. 8.

out horror. But this submission to God is never right, till all be given up into his hand that concerns us, to do with it and every article and circumstance of it, as seems good in his eyes. 2. In this *conscience*, is a religious and observant respect to the rule God hath set men to walk by in that condition; so that their obedience depends not upon any external inducement, failing when that fails, but flows from an inward impression of the law of God upon the heart. Thus a servant's obedience and patience, will not be pinned to the goodness and equity of his master, but when that fails, will subsist upon its own inward ground: and so generally in all other estates. This is the thing that makes sure and constant walking; makes a man *step even* in the ways of God. When a man's obedience springs from that unfailing, unchanging reason, the command of God, it is a natural motion; and therefore keeps on, and rather grows, than abates: but they that are moved by things outward, must often fail; because these things are not constant in their moving; as for instance, when a people are much acted by the spirit of their rulers, as the Jews when they had good kings. 3. In this is a tender care of the glory of God, and the adornment of religion, which the apostle premised before these particular duties, as a thing to be specially regarded in them. The honor of our Lord's name is that we should set up, as the mark to aim all our actions at: but alas! either we think not on it, or our hearts slip out, and start from their aim, *like bows of deceit*, as the word is.[a] 4. There is the comfortable persuasion of God's approbation and acceptance, as it is expressed in the following verse (of which somewhat before) and the hope of that reward he hath promised, as it is to servants, *Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ.*[b] No less than *the inheritance*. So then such servants as these, are *sons and heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ*. Thus he that is a servant

[a] Isa. lxxviii. 57. [b] Col. iii. 24.

may be in a far more excellent state than his master: The servant may hope for, and aim at a kingdom, while the master is embracing a dunghill. And they that are thus, think highly of God's free grace; and the looking to that inheritance, makes them go cheerfully through all pains and troubles here, as *light* and *momentary*, and not worth the naming in comparison of *that glory that shall be revealed*,[a] In the mean time, the best and most easy condition of the sons of God, cannot satisfy them, nor stay their sighs and *groans*, *waiting* and longing for *that day of their full redemption*.[b]

Now this is the great rule, not only for servants, but for all the servants of God in what estate soever, to *set the Lord always before them*,[c] and to study with St. Paul, *to have a conscience void of offence towards God and man*,[d] to eye, and to apply constantly to their actions, and their inward thoughts, the command of God, to walk by that rule abroad, and at home in their houses, and in the several ways of their calling: as an exact workman is ever and anon applying his rule to his work, and squaring it; and from conscience towards God, to do and suffer his will cheerfully in every thing, being content that he choose their condition and their trials for them; only desirous to be assured, that he hath chosen them for his own, and given them right to the *glorious liberty of the sons of God*,[e] still endeavouring to walk in that way that leads to it, overlooking *this moment*, and all things in it, accounting it a very indifferent matter what is their outward state here in this moment, provided they may be happy in eternity. Whether we be high or low here, bond or free, it imports little, seeing all these differences will be so quickly at an end, and there shall not be so much as any tract or footstep of them left with particular men. It is so in their graves; you

[a] Rom. viii. 16. 18. [b] chap. v. 23 [c] Psal. xvi. 8.
[d] Acts xxiv. 16. [e] Rom. viii. 21.

may distinguish the greater from the less by their tombs, but by their dust you cannot: and with the whole world it shall be so in the end. All monuments amd palaces, with cottages shall be made fire, as our Apostle tells us, *The elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and all the works therein shall be burnt up.*[a]

Ver. 21, *For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.*

22, *Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.*

23. *Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.*

THE rules that God hath set men to live by are universally just, and there is an universal obligation upon all men to obey them; but as they are particularly addressed to his own people in his word, *they* are out of question particularly bound to yield obedience, and have many peculiar persuasives to it, that extend not to others, which are therefore usually represented to them, and pressed upon them in the holy Scriptures. Thus the preface of the laws runs to *Israel;* besides that, *I am Jehovah,* and have supreme power to give men laws, is added, *I am thy God,* especially thy deliverer from slavery and bondage, and so have a peculiar right to thy obedience.[b] Thus the Apostle here urgeththis point in hand of inoffensiveness and patience, particularly in christian servants: but so as it fits every christian in his station, for *hereunto,* says he, *ye are called.* Whatsoever others do, though they think it too straight a rule, yet you are tied to it by your own calling and profession as you are christians; and this is evidently the highest and clearest reason that

[a] 2 Pet. iii. 10. [b] Deut. vii. 6.

can be, and of greatest power with a christian, namely, the example of Jesus Christ himself; *for Christ also suffered for us, &c.*

So it is all but one entire argument, that they ought thus to behave themselves, because it is the very thing they are called to, as their conformity to Jesus Christ, whose they profess to be, yea, with whom, as christians, they profess themselves to be one.

Hereunto were ye called.] This in the general is a thing that ought to be ever before our eye, to consider the nature and end of our calling, and to endeavour in all things to suit it; to think in every occurrence. What doth the calling of a christian require of me in this? But the truth is, the most do not mind this; we profess ourselves to be christians, and never think what kind of behaviour this obliges us to, and what manner of persons it becomes us to be *in all holy conversation*, and *walk disorderly* out of our rank, *inordinately*. You that are profane, were you called by the gospel to serve the world and your lusts, to swearing and rioting and voluptuousness? Hear you not the Apostle testifying the contrary, in express terms, *That God hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness*[a]; You that are of proud contentious spirits, are you suitable to this holy calling? No, for *we are called to peace*,[b] says the same Apostle: but we study not this holy calling, and therfore we walk so incongruously, so unlike the gospel, *we lie, and do not the truth*, as St. John speaks,[c] our actions belie us.

The particular things that christians are here said to be called to, are *suffering*, as their lot, and *patience*, as their duty, even under the most unjust and undeserved sufferings.

And both these are as large as the sphere of this calling. Not only servants and others of a mean condition, who lying low, are the more subject to rigors and injuries, but generally all who are call-

[a] 1 Thes. iv. 7. [b] 1 Cor. vii. 15. [c] 1 John i. 6.

ed to godliness, are likewise called to sufferings,[a] All that will follow Christ, must do it in his livery; they must take up their cross. This is a very harsh and unpleasing article of the gospel to a carnal mind, but it conceals it not. Men are not led blindfold upon sufferings, and drawn into a hidden snare by the gospel's invitations: they are told very often; that they may not pretend a surprisal, nor have any just plea for starting back again, as our Saviour tells his disciples, why he was so express and plain with them in this, *These things*, says he, *have I told you, that you be not offended.*[b] I have shewed you the ruggedness of your way, that you may not stumble at it, taking it to be a smooth plain one: but then where this is spoke of, it is usually allayed with the mention of those comforts that accompany these sufferings, or that glory that follows them. The doctrine of the Apostles, which was so exactly verified in their own persons, was this, *That through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God.*[c] An unpleasant way indeed, if you look no further, but there is a *kingdom* at the end of it, and *the kingdom* of God will transfuse pleasure into the most painful step in this way. It seems a sad condition that falls to the share of godly men in the world, to be eminent in sorrows and troubles. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous*,[d] but that which follows weighs them abundantly down in consolation, that the Lord himself is engaged in their afflictions, both for their deliverance out of them in due time, and in the mean time, for their support and preservation under them; *the Lord delivers them out of them all.* And till he does that, he *keepeth all their bones*, &c. which was literally verified in the natural body of Christ, as St. John observes,[e] and holds spiritually true in his mystical body. The Lord supports the spirits of believers in their troubles with such solid consolations, as are the pillars and strength of their souls, as the bones are

[a] 2 Tim. iii. 12. [b] John xvi. 1. [c] Acts xiv. 22.
[d] Psa. xxxiv. 19. [e] John xix. 36.

of the body, as the Hebrew word for them imports, so *he keepeth all his bones*; and the desperate condition of wicked men is opposed to this, to illustrate it[a], *But evil shall slay the wicked.*

Thus, in the close, they are forewarned what to expect at the world's hands, as they were divers times before in that same sermon: but it is a sweet testament, take it altogether, *ye shall have tribulation in the world, but peace in me;*[b] and seeing he hath jointly bequeathed these two to his followers, were it not great folly to renounce such a bargain, and to let go that peace for fear of this trouble? The trouble is but *in the world*, but the *peace* is *in him*, who weighs down thousands of worlds.

So then they do exceedingly mistake and misreckon, that would reconcile Christ and the world, that would have the church of Christ, or at least, themselves for their own shares, enjoy both kinds of peace together; would willingly have peace in Christ, but are very loth to part with the world's peace; they would be christians, but they are very ill satisfied when they hear of any thing but ease and prosperity in that estate, and willingly forget the tenor of the gospel in this; and so when times of trouble and sufferings come, their minds are as new and uncouth to it, as if they had not been told of it before-hand. They like better St. Peter's carnal advice to Christ to avoid suffering,[c] than his Apostles doctrine to Christians, teaching them, that as he *suffered*, so they likewise *are called to suffering*. Men are ready to think as Peter did, that Christ should favour himself more in his own body, his church, than to expose it to so much suffering; and most would be of Rome's mind in this, at least in affection, that the badge of the church should be pomp and prosperity, and not the cross; the true cross and afflictions are too heavy and painful.

But *God's thoughts are not ours*; those whom he calls to a kingdom, he calls to sufferings, as the way

[a] ver. 21. [b] John xvi. [c] Matt. xvi. 22.

to it. He would have the heirs of heaven know, they are not at home on earth, and that *this is not their rest.* He will not have them with the abused world fancy a happiness here, and seek a happy life in the region of death, as St. Augustin says.[a] The reproaches and wrongs that encounter them shall elevate their minds often to that land of peace and rest, *where righteousness dwells,*[b] The hard taskmasters shall make them weary of Egypt, (which otherwise possibly they would comply too well with) and dispose them for deliverance, and make it welcome; which, it may be, they might but coldly desire, if they were better used.

He knows what he does, who secretly serves his good ends of mens evil, and, by the *plowers that make long furrows* on the back of his church,[c] makes it a fruitful field to himself. Therefore, it is great folly and unadvisedness, to take up a prejudice against his way, and think it might be better as we would model it, and to complain of the order of things; whereas we should complain of disordered minds, but we had rather have all altered and changed for us, the very course of Providence, than seek the change of our own perverse hearts: whereas the right temper of a christian is, to run always cross to the corrupt stream of the world, and human iniquity, and to be willingly carried along with the stream of divine Providence, and not at all to stir a hand, no, nor a thought, to row against that mighty current; and not only is he carried with it upon necessity, because there is no steering against it, but cheerfully and voluntarily; not because he must, but because he would.

And this is the other thing to which they are jointly called, as to suffering, so to *calmness of mind,* and *patience in suffering,* although their suffering be most unjust; yea, this is truly a part of that duty they are called to, a part of that integrity and inoffensiveness

[a] Beatam vitam quærere in regione mortis.
[b] 2 Pet. iii. 13. [c] Psa. cxxix. 3.

of life that may make their sufferings at mens hands always unjust. The entire duty here is innocence and patience, doing willingly no wrong to others, and yet cheerfully suffering it when done to themselves. If either of the two be wanting, their suffering do not credit their profession, but dishonours it. If they be patient under deserved suffering, their guiltiness darkens their patience; and if their sufferings be undeserved, yea, and the cause of them honourable, yet impatience under them stains both their sufferings and their cause, and seems in part to justify the very injustice that is used against them: but when innocence and patience meet together in suffering, there sufferings are in their perfect lustre. These are they that honour religion, and shame the enemies of it. It was the concurrence of these two that was the very triumph of the martyrs in times of persecution, that tormented their tormentors, and made them *more than conquerors*,[a] even in sufferings.

Now that we are called both to suffering, and to this manner of suffering, the Apostle puts out of question, by the supreme example of our Lord Jesus Christ; for the sum of our calling is, *to follow him*. Now in both these, in suffering, and in suffering innocently and patiently, the whole history of the gospel testifies how complete a pattern he is. And the Apostle gives us here a summary, yet a very clear account of it.

The words have in them these two things, 1. The perfection of this example. 2. Our obligation to follow it.

I. The example he sets off to the full, 1. In regard of the greatness of his sufferings. 2. Of his spotlessness and patience in suffering.

The first we have in that word *he suffered*, and after *v.* 24. we have his crucifying and his stripes expressly specified.

Now this is reason enough, and carries it beyond all other reason, why christians are called to a suf-

[a] Rom. viii. 37.

fering life, seeing the Lord and Author of that calling suffered himself so much. The Captain or Leader *of our salvation*, as the Apostle speaks, was *consecrated by suffering*,[a] that was the way by which *he entered into the holy place*, where he is now *our everlasting High-Priest, making intercession for us*. If he be our Leader to salvation, must not we follow him in the way he leads, whatsoever it is? If it be (as we see it is) by the way of sufferings, we must either follow on in that way, or fall short of salvation; for there is no other Leader, nor other way but that which he opened: so that there is not only a congruity in it, that his followers be conformed to him in suffering, but a necessity, if they will follow him on, till they attain to glory. And the consideration of both these cannot but argue a christian into a resolution for this *via regia*, this royal way of suffering that leads to glory, through which their King and Lord himself went to his glory. It could hardly be believed at first that this was his way, and we can as hardly yet believe that it must be ours, *O fools and slow of heart to believe; ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory?*[b]

Would you be at glory, and will you not follow your Leader in the only way to it? Must another way be cut out for you by yourself? O absurd! *Shall the servant* (says he,) *be greater than his master?*[c] Are not you fairly dealt with, if you have a mind to Christ? You shall have full as much of the world's good-will as he had: *if it hate you*, he bids you remember, *how it hated him:*[d]

But though there were a way to do otherwise, would you not rather chuse (if the love of Christ possessed your hearts) to share with him in his lot, and would you not find delight in the very trouble of it? Is not this conformity to Jesus the great ambition of all his true-hearted followers? *We carry a-*

[a] Heb. ii. 10. [b] Luke xxiv. 25, 26. [c] John xiii. 16. [d] chap. xv. 18.

bout in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, says the great Aposle.[a] Besides the unspeakable advantage to come, that goes linked with this, that *if we suffer with him, we shall reign with him.*[b] There is a glory, even in this present resemblance, that we are *conformed to the image of the Son of God* in sufferings. Why should we desire to leave him? Are you not one with him? Can you chuse but have the same common friends and enemies? Would you willingly, if it might be, could you find in you heart to be friends with that world that hated your Lord and Master?. Would you have nothing but kindness and ease, where he had nothing but enmity and trouble? Or would you not rather, when you think right of it, refuse and disdain to be so unlike him? As that good Duke said, when they would have crowned him king of Jerusalem, *No,* said he, *by no means, I will not wear a crown of gold where Jesus was crowned with thorns.*

2. This spotlessness and patience in suffering are both of them set here before us; the one *v.* 22. the other *v.* 23.

Whosoever thou art that maketh a noise about the injustice of what thou sufferest, and thinkest to justify thy impatience by thine innocence, let me ask thee, Art thou more just and innocent than he that is here set before thee? Or art thou able to come near him in this point? *Who did no sin neither was guile found in his mouth.* This is to signify perfect holiness, according to that.[c] Man is by some called a little world; he is indeed a world of wickedness, and that little part of him, *the tongue,* is *a little world of iniquity.* All Christ's words and actions, and all his thoughts, flowed from a pure spring that had not any thing defiled in it; and therefore no temptation either from men or Satan could seize on him. Other men may seem clear as long as they are unstirred, but move and trouble them and the mud arises; whereas he was nothing but holiness, a pure fountain,

[a] 2 Cor. iv. 10. [b] 2 Tim. ii. 12. [c] James iii. 2.

all purity to the bottom; and therefore stir and trouble him as they would, he was still alike clear. *The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.*[a]

This is the main ground of our confidence in him, that he is *a holy, harmless, undefiled High-Priest*, and *such a one became us*, says the Apostle, that are so sinful[b]. The more sinful we are, the more need that our High-Priest should be sinless; and being so, we may build upon his perfection, standing in our stead, yea, we are invested with him and his righteousness.

Again, *there was no guile found in his mouth.* This serves to convince us concerning all the promises that he hath made us, that they are nothing but truth. Hath he said, *him that comes to me, I will in no ways cast out,*[c] then you need not fear, how unworthy and vile soever you may be; do but come to him, and you have his word that he will not shut the door against you. And as he hath promised access, so he hath further promised ease, and souls rest to those that come.[d] Then be confident to find that in him too, for there was never a *false* nor *guileful word found in his mouth.*

But to consider it only in the present action, this speaks him the most innocent sufferer that ever was, not only judicially just in his cause, but entirely just in his person; altogether righteous, and yet condemned to death, and an opprobrious death of malefactors, and set betwixt two, as chief of the three. *I am*, says he, *the rose of Sharon, and the lilly of the valley.*[e] And the spouse saith of him, *my well-beloved is white and ruddy.*[f] Thus indeed he was in his death, ruddy in his bloodshed, and white in his innocence, and withal in his meekness and patience; the other thing wherein he is here so exemplary.

Ver. 23. *Who when he was reviled, reviled not again.*] This spotless Lamb of God was a Lamb both in guiltlessness and silence; and the Prophet Isaiah ex-

[a] John xiv. 39. [b] Heb. vii. 26. [c] John vi. 37.
[d] Matt. xi. 30. [e] Cant. ii. 1. [f] Cant. v. 10.

presses the resemblance, in that *he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter.*[a] He suffered not only an unjust sentence of death, but also unjust revilings, *the contradictions of sinners.* None ever did so little deserve revilings; none ever could have said so much in his own just defence, and to the just reproach of his enemies; and yet in both he preferred silence. None could ever threaten so heavy things as he could against his enemies, and have made good all he threatened, and yet no such thing was heard from him. The heaven and earth, as it were, spoke their resentment of his death that made them: but he was silent; or what he spoke makes this still good, how far he was from revilings and threatenings. As spices pounded, or precious ointment poured out, give their smell most, thus his *name was an ointment* then *poured forth,*[b] together with his blood, and filled heaven and earth with its sweet perfume; was a Savour of rest and peace in both, appeasing the wrath of God, and so quieting the consciences of men. And even in this particular was it then most fragrant, in that all the torments of the cross and revilings of the multitude, as it were racked him for some answer, yet could draw no other from him but this, *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.*[c]

But for those to whom this mercy belonged not, the Apostle tells us what he did; instead of revilings and threatenings, *he committed all to him that judgeth righteously.* And this is the true method of christian patience, that which quiets the mind and keeps it from the boiling tumultuous thoughts of revenge; to turn the whole matter into God's hand, to resign it over to him, to prosecute when and as he thinks good. Not as the most, who had rather, if they had power, do for themselves, and be their own avengers; and because they had not power, do offer up such bitter curses and prayers for revenge unto God, as are most hateful to him, and are far from this calm and holy way of committing matters to his judgment,

[a] Isa. liii. 7. [b] Cant. i. 3. [c] Luke, xxiii. 34.

The common way of referring things to God is indeed impious, and dishonourable to him, being really no other but a calling him to be a servant, and executioner of our passion. We ordinarily mistake his justice, and judge of it according to our own precipitant and distempered minds. If wicked men be not crossed in their designs, and their wickedness evidently crushed, just when we would have it, we are ready to give up the matter as desperate, or at least to abate of those confident and reverent thoughts of divine justice which we owe him. Howsoever things go, this ought to be fixed in our hearts, that *he that sits in heaven* judgeth righteously, and executes that his righteous judgment in the fittest season. We poor worms, whose whole life is but an *hand-breadth* in itself, and is *as nothing* unto God, think a few months or years a great matter; but to him that inhabits eternity, *a thousand years are but as one day*, as our Apostle teaches us.[a]

Our Saviour in that time of his humiliation and suffering, committed himself and his cause (for that is best expressed, in that nothing is expressed but *he committed) to him that judgeth righteously*, and the issue shall be, that *all his enemies shall become his foot-stool*, and he himself shall judge them. But that which is given us here to learn from his carriage toward them in his suffering is, that quietness and moderation in mind, even under unjust sufferings, make us like him. Not to reply reproach with reproach, as our custom is, to give an ill word for another, or two for one, to be sure not to be behind. Men take a pride in this, and think it ridiculous simplicity to suffer; and this makes strifes and contention so much abound. But it is a great mistake; you think it greatness of spirit to bear nothing, to put up no wrong, whereas indeed it is great weakness and baseness. It is true greatness of spirit to despise the most of those things which set you usually on fire one against another, especially being done after a chris-

[a] 2 Pet. iii. 8.

tian manner. It were a part of the spirit of Christ in you, and is there any spirit greater than that, think you? Oh! that there were less of the spirit of the dragon, and more of the spirit of the dove amongst us.

2. Our obligement to follow the example of Christ, besides its own excellency, is intimated in these two things contained in the words, 1. The intendment of of his behaviour for this use, to be as an example to us. 2. Our interest in him, and those his sufferings, wherein he so carried himself.

1. That his behaviour was intended for an example, *leaving us an example, &c.* He left his footsteps as a copy, (as the word ὑπογραμμὸν imports) to be followed by us: every step of his, is a letter of this copy, and particularly in this point of suffering, he writ us a pure and perfect copy of obedience, in clear and great letters, in his own blood.

His whole life is our rule: not his miraculous works; his footsteps walking on the sea, and such like, they are not for our following: but his obedience, holiness, meekness and humility are our copy, which we should continually study. The shorter and more effectual way, they say, of teaching, is by example: but above all, this matchless example is the happiest way of teaching, *he that follows me*, says he, *shall not walk in darkness.*[a]

He that aims high, shoots the higher for it, though he shoot not so high as he aims. This is that which ennobles the spirit of a christian, the propounding of this our high pattern, the example of Jesus Christ.

The imitation of men in worthless things is low and servile; the imitation of their virtues is commendable, but if we aim no higher, it is both imperfect and unsafe. The Apostle St. Paul will have no imitation, but with regard to this supreme pattern, *be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ.*[b] One christian may take the example of Christ, in many things in another, but still he ought to examine all by the

[a] John viii. 12. [b] 1 Cor. xi. 1.

original primitive copy, the footsteps of Christ himself, following nothing, but as it conforms with that, and looking chiefly on him, both as the most perfect and the most effectual example.[a] There is *a cloud of witnesses* and examples, but look above them all to him, who is as high above them, as the sun is above the clouds. As the way is better, a lively one indeed, so there is this advantage in the covenant of grace, that we are not left to our own skill for following it, but taught by the Spirit: in the delivery of the law, God shewed his glory and greatness by manner of it; but whereas, the law was written only in dead tables, Christ, the living law, teaches by obeying it, how to obey it; and this is the advantage of the gospel, that the law is twice written over unto believers, first, in the example of Christ, and then inwardly in their hearts by his Spirit. There is, together with that copy of all grace in him, a Spirit derived from him, enabling believers to follow him in their measure. They may not only see him as *the only begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth*, as it is[b], but as there it follows, *they receive of his fulness grace for grace*[c]. The love of Christ makes the soul delight to converse with him; and converse and love together, makes it learn his behaviour; as men that live much together, especially if they do much affect one another, will insensibly contract one anothers habits and customs.

The other thing obliging us, is, 2dly, Our interest in him, and his sufferings; *he suffered for us*; and to this the Apostle returns *v.* 24. Observe only from the tie of these two, that if we neglect his example set before us, we cannot enjoy any right assurance of his suffering for us; but if we do seriously endeavour to follow him, then we may expect to obtain life through his death, aad those steps of his wherein we walk, will bring us ere long to *be where he is.*

[a] Heb. xii. 2 [b] John i. 14. [c] ver 16.

Ver. 24. *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on tree, that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed.*

THAT which is deepest in the heart is generally most in the mouth; that which abounds within, runs over most by the tongue or pen. When men light upon the speaking of that subject which possesses the affection, they can hardly be taken off, or drawn from it again. Thus the Apostles in their writings, when they make mention any way of Christ suffering for us, they love to dwell on it, as that which they take most delight to speak of; such delicacy and sweetness is in it to a spiritual taste, that they like to keep it in their mouth, and are never out of their theme, when they insist on Jesus Christ, though they have but named him by occasion of some other doctrine; for he is the great subject of all they have to say.

Thus here the Apostle had spoke of Christ in the foregoing words very fitly to this present subject, setting him before christian servants, and all suffering christians, as their complete example, both in point of much suffering, and of perfect innocence and patience in suffering. And he had expressed their engagement to study and follow that example; yet he cannot leave it so, but having said that all those his sufferings wherein he was so exemplary, were for us, as a chief consideration, for which we should study to be like him, he returns to that again, and enlarges upon it in words partly the same, partly very near those of that Evangelist among the prophets[a].

And it suits very well with his main scope to press this point, as giving both very much strength and sweetness to the exhortation; for surely it is most reasonable, that we willingly conform to him in suffering, who had never been an example of suffering,

[a] Isa. liii. 4.

not subject at all to sufferings, nor in any degree capable of them, but for us; and it is most comfortable in *these light sufferings of this present moment*, to consider, that he hath freed us from the sufferings of eternity, by suffering himself in our stead in the fulness of time.

That Jesus Christ is, in doing and suffering, our supreme and matchless example, and that he came to be so, is a truth: but that he is nothing further, and came for no other end, is, you see, a high point of falsehood: for how should man be enabled to learn and follow that example of obedience, unless there were more in Christ; and what would become of that great reckoning of disobedience that man stands guilty of? No, these are too narrow; he came to *bear our sins in his own body on the tree*, and for this purpose had a body fitted for him, and given him to bear this burden; to do this, as the will of his Father; to stand for us instead of all offerings and sacrifices; and *by that will*, says the Apostle, *we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*[a].

This was his business, not only to rectify sinful man by his example, but to redeem him by his blood. *He was a teacher come from God.* As a prophet he teaches us the way to life, and as the best and greatest of prophets, is perfectly like his doctrine; and his actions, (that in all teachers is the liveliest part of doctrine) his carriage in life and death, is our great pattern and instruction: but what is said of his forerunner, is more eminently true of Christ; he is *a prophet, and more than a prophet*, a priest satisfying justice for us, and a king conquering sin and death for us; an example indeed, but more than an example, our *sacrifice*, and *our life*, and *all in all*. It is our duty to *walk as he walked*, to make him the pattern of our steps[b]. But our comfort and salvation lieth in this, that *he is the propitiation for our sins*. v. 2. So in the first chapter of that epistle, v. 7. *We*

[a] Heb. x. 9. [b] 1 John. ii. 6.

are to walk in the light, as he is in the light: but for all our walking we have need of that which follows, that bears the great weight, the *blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.* And so still that glory which he possesseth in his own person, is the pledge of ours; he is there for *us*; *he lives to make intercession for us*, says the Apostle[a], and *I go to prepare a place for you*, says he himself[b].

We have in the words these two great points, and in the same order as the words lay; 1. The nature and quality of the sufferings of Jesus Christ. And 2. The end of them.

1. The nature and quality of the sufferings of Christ, *he himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree.* In this expression of his sufferings, we are to consider, 1. The commutation of the persons, *he himself for us.* 2. The work undertaken and performed, *he bare our sins in his own body on the tree.*

1. The act or sentence of the law against the breach of it standing in force, and divine justice expecting satisfaction, death was the necessary and inseparable consequent of sin. If you say the supreme Majesty of God being accountable to none, might have forgiven all without satisfaction; we are not to contest that, nor foolishly to offer to sound the bottomless depth of his absolute prerogative. Christ implies in his prayer[c], that it was *impossible* that he could escape *that cup*: but the impossibility is resolved into his Father's will, as the cause of it. But this we may clearly see, following the tract of the holy scriptures (our only safe way) that this way wherein our salvation is contrived, is most excellent, and suitable to the greatness and goodness of God; so full of wonders of wisdom and love, that the angels, as our Apostle tells us before, cannot forbear looking on it, and admiring it; for all their exact knowledge, yet they still find it infinitely beyond their knowledge, still in astonishment and admiration of what they see, and still in search, looking in to see more; those cherubims still having their eyes fixed on this mercy-seat.

[a] Heb. vii. 25. [b] John xiv. 2. [c] Matt. xxvi. 39.

Justice might indeed have seized on rebellious man, and laid the pronounced punishment on him; Mercy might have freely acquitted him, and pardoned all: but can we name any place where Mercy and Justice, as relating to condemned man, could have met and shined jointly in full aspect, save only in Jesus Christ, in whom indeed, *Mercy and Truth met, and Righteousness and Peace kissed each other*[a], yea, in whose person the parties concerned, that were at so great a distance, met so near, as nearer cannot be imagined.

And not only was this the only way, for the consistence of these two, Justice and Mercy, but take each of them severally, and they could not have been in so full lustre, as in this. God's just hatred of sin did, out of doubt appear more in punishing his only begotten Son for it, than if the whole race of mankind had suffered for it eternally. Again, it raises the notion of Mercy to the highest, that sin is not only forgiven us, but for this end God's own co-eternal Son is given to us, and for us. Consider what he is, and what we are; he the *Son of his love*, and we enemies: Therefore it is emphatically expressed in the words, *he himself bare our sins. God so loved the world*[b], that love amounts to this much, that is was so great, as *to give his Son:* but how great that is cannot be uttered. *In this*, says the Apostle[c], *God commendeth his love to us*, sets it off to the highest, give us the richest and strongest evidence of it.

The foundation of this frame, this appearing of Christ for us, and undergoing and answering all in our stead, lies in the decree of God, where it was plotted and contrived in the whole way of it from eternity, and the Father and the Son being one, and their thoughts and will one, they were perfectly agreed on it; and those likewise for whom it should hold, were agreed upon, and their names written down, according to which they are said to be *given unto Christ to redeem.* And just according to

[a] Psal. lxxxv. 10. [b] John iii. 16. [c] Rom. v. 8.

that model did all the work proceed, and was accomplished in all points, perfectly answering to the pattern of it in the mind of God. As it was preconcluded there, that the Son should undertake the business, this matchless piece of service for his Father, and that by his interposing, men should be reconciled and saved; so that he might be altogether a fit person for the work, it was resolved, that as he was already fit for it by the Almightiness of his Deity and Godhead, and the acceptableness of his person to the Father, as the Son of God, so he should be further fitted by uniting wonderfully weakness to Almightiness, the frailty of man to the power of God; because that suffering for man was a main point of the work, so as his being the Son of God made him acceptable to God, his being the Son of man made him suitable to man, in whose business he had engaged himself, and suitable to the business itself to be performed. And not only was there in him, by his human nature, a conformity with man (for that might have been by a new created body,) but a consanguinity with man, by a body framed of the same piece, a Redeemer, a Kinsman, as the Hebrew word *goel* is, only purified for his use, as was needful, and framed after a peculiar manner in the womb of a virgin, as it is expressed[a], *thou hast fitted a body for me.* having no sin itself, because ordained to have so much of our sins, as it is here, *he bare them in his own body*, which expresses.

2. The work undertaken; and this looks back to the primitive transaction and purpose, *Lo I come to do thy will*[b], says the Son; and *behold my Servant whom I have chosen*[c], says the Father; in this master-piece of my works, none in heaven or earth is fit to serve me, but mine own Son. And as he came into the world according to that decree and will, so he goes out of it again in that way, *the Son of Man goeth as is determined*[d], it was wickedly and maliciously done by men against him, but *determined* (which is that he there

[a] Heb. x. 5. [b] Psa. xl. 7. [c] Isa. xliii. 10. [d] Luke xxii. 22

speaks of) wisely and graciously by his Father, with his own consent. As in those two faced pictures, look upon the crucifying of Christ one way, as complotted by a treacherous disciple, and malicious priests and rulers, and nothing more deformed and hateful than the authors of it; but view it again, as determined in God's counsel, for the restoring of lost mankind; and so it is full of unspeakable beauties and sweetness, infinite wisdom and love in every tract of it.

This refers also to the persons for whom he engaged, as their coming unto him reflects upon that first donation, and is represented as flowing from that, *all that the Father giveth me shall come unto me*[a].

Now this being God's great design, that he would have men eye and consider more than all the rest of his works, (though it is least of all considered by the most) the other covenant made with the first *Adam* was but to make way, and if we may so speak, to make work for this: For he knew that it would not hold, therefore as this new covenant became needful by the breach of the other, so the failing of that other sets off and commends the firmness of this. The former was with a man in his best condition, and yet he kept it not, even then he proved vanity, as it is[b], *Verily every man in his best estate is altogether vanity.* So that the second, to be stronger, is made with a man indeed, to supply the former; but he is *God-man*, to be surer than the former, and therefore it holds. And this is the difference, as the Apostle expresses it, that the first *Adam*, in that first covenant, was laid as a foundation; and though we say not, that the church, in its true notion, was built on him, yet the estate of the whole race of mankind, the materials that the church is built of, lay on him for that time, and it failed. But upon this rock, the second *Adam*, is the church so firmly built, that *the gates of hell cannot prevail against her*[c]. The *last Adam* was made

[a] John vi. 37. [b] Psal. xxxix. 5. [c] Matth. xvi. 18.

a *quickening* or life giving *spirit*. The first had life, but he transferred it not, yea, he kept it not for himself, but drew in and transferred death; but the second, by death, conveys life to all that are reckoned his seed: *He bare their sins.*

He bare them *on the tree.* In that outside of his suffering, the visible kind of death inflicted on him, that it was hanging on the tree of the cross, there was an analogy with the end, and main work, which was ordered by the Lord with regard unto that, being a death declared *accursed by the law*, as the Apostle St. *Paul* observes[d], and so declaring him that was *God blessed for ever*, to have been *made a curse*, that is, accounted as accursed for us, that we might be blessed in him, *in whom* according to the promise, *all the nations of the earth are blessed.*

But that wherein lay the strength, and main stress of his sufferings, was this invisible weight that none could see that gazed on him; but he felt more than all the rest. In this there are three things. 1. The weight of sin. 2. The transferring of it upon Christ. 3. His bearing of it.

1. He bare sin as a heavy burden; so the word of *bearing* in general, ἀναφέρειν, and those two words particularly used by the prophet[e], to which these allude, סבל נשא are the *bearing of some great mass* or *load*, and that sin is: For it hath the wrath of an offended God hanging at it, indissolubly tied to it; of which who can bear the least? And therefore the least sin, being the procuring cause of it, will press a man down for ever, that he shall not be able to rise. *Who can stand before thee when once thou art angry*, says the *Psalmist*[f]; and the Prophet[g], *Return backsliding Israel and I will not cause my wrath to fall upon thee; to fall* as a great weight, or as a millstone, and crush the soul.

But senseless, we go light under the burden of

[d] Gal. iii. 13. [e] Isa. liii. 4. [f] Psal. lxxvi. 7. [g] Jer. iii. 12.

sin, and feel it not, we complain not of it, and are therefore truly said to be *dead in it*, otherwise it could not but press us, and press out complaints: *O! wretched man that I am who shall deliver me*[h]? A prophane secure sinner thinks it nothing to break the holy law of God, to please his flesh, or the world, he counts sin a light matter; and *makes a mock* of it, as *Solomon* says[i], but a stirring conscience is of another mind, *Mine iniquities are gone over my head, as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me*[k].

Sin is such a burden as makes the very frame of Heaven and earth that is not guilty of it, yea, the whole creation, to crack and groan; (it is the Apostle's doctrine[l],) and yet the impenitent heart whose guiltiness it is, continues unmoved, and groaneth not; for your accustomed groaning is no such matter.

Yea, to consider in the present subject where we may best read what it is, it was a heavy load to Jesus Christ[m], where the *Psalmist*, speaking in the person of Christ, complains heavily, *innumerable evils have compassed me about. Mine iniquities*, not his, as done by him, but yet his, by his undertaking to pay for them, *they have taken hold of me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me.* And sure that which pressed *him* so sore, who upholds Heaven and earth, no other in Heaven or in earth could have sustained and surmounted, but would have sunk and perished under it. Was it, think you, the pain of that common outside of his death, though very painful, that drew such a word from him, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Or was it the fear of it before hand, that pressed *a sweat of blood* from him? No, it was this burden of sin, the first of which was committed in the garden of *Eden*, that then begun to be laid upon him, and fastened upon his

[h] Rom. vii. 24. [i] Prov. xiv. 9. [k] Psal. xxxviii. 4.
[l] Rom. viii. 22. [m] See Psal. xl. 12.

shoulders in the garden of *Gethsemane*, ten thousand times heavier than the cross, which he was caused to bear: That might be a while turned over to another, but this could not. This was the cup he trembled more at, than that gall and vinegar after to be offered him by his crucifiers, or any other part of his external sufferings. It was the bitter cup of wrath due to sin that his Father put into his hand, and caused him to drink, the very same thing that is here called the *bearing our sins in his body*.

And consider that the very smallest sins went in to make up this load, and made it so much the heavier; and therefore, though sins be comparatively lesser and greater, yet learn thence to account no sin in itself small that offends the great God, and lay heavy upon your great Redeemer in the day of his sufferings.

At his apprehending, besides the soldiers, that invisible crowd of the sins he was to suffer for came about him, for it was they that laid strongest hold on him; he could easily have shaken off all the rest, as appears[n], but our sins laid the arrest on him, being accounted his, as it is in that forecited place[o], *Mine iniquities*. Now, amongst these were even those sins we call small; they were of the number that took him, and they were amongst those instruments of his bloodshed. If the greater were as the spear that pierced his side, the less were as the nails that pierced his hands and his feet, and the very least as the thorns that were set on his precious head. And the multitude of them made up what was wanting in their magnitude; though they were small, they were many.

2. They were transferred upon him by virtue of that covenant we spoke of. They became his debt, and he responsible for all they came to. "Seeing "you have accepted of this business according to "my will, (may we conceive the Father saying to "his Son) you must go through with it; you are

[n] Matth. xxvi. 33. [o] Psal. xl. 12.

"engaged in it, but it is no other than what you "understood perfectly before; you knew what it "would cost you, and yet out of joint love with "me to those I named to be saved by you, you "were as willing as I to the whole undertaking. "Now therefore the time is come that I must lay "upon you the sins of all those persons, and you "must bear them; the sins of all those believers "that lived before, and all that are to come after to "the end of the world." *The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all*, says the prophet[p], took it off from us, and charged it on him, made it *to meet on him*, or *to fall in together*, as the word יפגיע is: The sins of all, in all ages before and after, that were to be saved, all their guiltiness re-encountered and met together on his back upon the cross; and whosoever of all that number had least sin, yet had no small burden to cast on him: And to give accession to the whole weight, *Every man hath had his own way of wandering*, as the Prophet there expresseth it, and he paid for all; all fell on him. And as in testimony of his meekness and patience, so in this regard likewise was he so silent in his sufferings, in regard that though his enemies dealt most unjustly with him, yet he stood as convicted before the justice-seat of his Father, under the imputed guilt of all our sins; and so eying him, and accounting his business to be chiefly with him, he did patiently bear the due punishment of all our sins at his Father's hand, and suited that of the Psalmist, *I was as dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it*[q]. Therefore the Prophet immediately subjoins that of his silent carriage[r], to that which he had spoken of the confluence of our iniquities upon him.

And if our sins were thus accounted his, then in the same way, and for that very reason, of necessity, his sufferings and satisfaction must be accounted ours; as he said for his disciples to the men that came to take him, *If it be me ye seek, then let them*

[p] Isa. liii. 6. [q] Ps. xxxix. 9. [r] Isa. liii. 7.

go free[s]. So he said for all believers to his Father, his wrath then seizing on him, "If on me you will "lay hold, then let these go free." And thus the agreement was[t], *He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

So then, there is an union betwixt believers and Jesus Christ, by which this interchange is made: He is charged with their sins, and they are cloathed with his satisfaction and righteousness; and that union is founded, 1*st*, In God's decree of election, running this way, that they should live in Christ, and so chusing the head and the whole mystical body as one, and reckoning their debt as his, in his purpose, that he might receive satisfaction, and they salvation in their head Christ. The execution of that purpose and union begun in Christ's incarnation, being for them, though the nature be more common, he is said *not to take the nature of Angels, but the seed of Abraham*[u], the company of believers; he became man for their sakes, because they are men. That he is of the same nature with unbelieving men that perish, is but by accident, as it were, there is no good to them in that, but the great evil of deeper condemnation, if they hear of him, and believe not; but he was made man to be like, yea, to be one with the elect, *and he is not ashamed to call them brethren*, as the Apostle there says[x]. 2*dly*, The union is also founded in the actual intention of the Son so made man; he presenting himself to the Father in all he did, and suffered *as for them*, having them, and *them only* in his eye and thoughts in all, *For their sakes do I sanctify myself*[y]. Again, 3*dly*, The union is applied and performed in them, when they are converted and ingrafted into Jesus Christ by faith; and this doth actually discharge them of their own sins, and entitle them to his righteousness, and so justifies them in the sight of God. 4*thly*, The consumma-

[s] John xviii. 8. [t] 2 Cor. v. ult. [u] Heb. ii. 16.
[x] Heb. ii. 11. [y] John xvii. 1. 9.

tion of this union is in glory, which is the result and fruit of all the former. As it began in Heaven, it is completed there; but betwixt these two in Heaven, the intervention of those other two degrees of it on earth was necessary, being intended in the first, as tending to the attainment of the last. These four steps of it are all distinctly expressed in his own prayer[z], *1st*, God's purpose that the Son should give *eternal life to those that he hath given him*, ver. 2. *2dly*, The Son's undertaking and accomplishing their redemption, in *ver.* 4, *I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.* *3dly*, The application of this union, and its performance in them, by their *faith*, their *believing*, and *keeping his word*, ver. 6. 8. and in several of the subsequent verses. And then *lastly*, We have the consummation of this union, ver. 24, *I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am.* There meets the first donation and the last.

Now to obtain this life for them, he died *in their stead*, appeared as the high-priest, being perfectly and truly what the name was on their plate of gold, *Holiness to the Lord*[a], and so bearing their iniquity, as it is added there of the priest, ver. 38. But because that priest was not the Redeemer, but an imperfect figure of him, he did not himself suffer for the people's sin, but turned it over upon the beasts that he sacrificed; signifying that translation of sin, by laying his hand upon the head of the beast; but Jesus Christ is both the great high-priest and the great sacrifice in one. And this seems to be here implied in these words, *Himself bare our sins in his own body;* which the legal priest did not: So *he made his soul an offering for sin*[b]. He offered up himself, his *whole self*. In the history of the Gospel, it is said, his *soul was heavy*, and chiefly suffered; but the bearing in his body, and offering it, that is oftenest mentioned as the

[z] John xvii. [a] Exod. xxviii. 36.
[b] Isa. liii. 10. and Heb. ix. 12.

visible part of the sacrifice, and in his way of offering it, not excluding the other. Thus[c], we are exhorted to give *our bodies*, in opposition to the bodies of beasts, and they are therefore called *a living sacrifice*, which they are not without the soul: Thus his bearing *in his body* imports the bearing it in his soul too.

3. His *bearing*, that hints that he was active and willing in his suffering for us; not a constrained offering. *He laid down his life*, as he tells us[d], and this here, *He bare*, is, he took willingly off, lifted from us that burden to bear it himself. It was counted an ill sign amongst the heathens, when the beasts went unwillingly to be sacrificed, and drew back; and a good omen when they went willingly: But never was sacrifice so willing as our great sacrifice; and we may be assured he hath appeased his Father's wrath, and wrought atonement for us. *Isaac* was in this his type; we hear of no reluctance, but he submitted quietly to be bound when he was to be offered up. There be two words in *Isaiah*, liii. 4. the one *bearing*, the other *taking away*; this is also that *taking away the sins of the world* in St. *John*, i. 29. which answers to both; and so he to both the goats, the victim, the sin-offering, and the scape-goat[e]. He did bear our sins on his cross, and from thence to his grave, and there they are buried; and they whose sins he did so bear, and take away, and bury, shall hear no more of them as theirs to bear. Is he not then worthy to be viewed in that notion that *John*, in the fore-mentioned text, took him and designed him by. *Behold the Lamb of God that beareth and takes away the sins of the world.*

You then that are gazing on vanity, be persuaded to turn your eyes this way, and behold this lasting wonder, this Lord of life dying! But the most, alas! want a due eye for this object: It is the eye of faith alone that looks aright on him, and is daily discovering new worlds of excellency and delight

[c] Rom. xii. 1. [d] John x. 18. [e] Lev. xvi.

in this crucified Saviour; that can view him daily, as hanging on the cross, without the childish gawdy help of a crucifix, and grow in the knowledge of that *love that passeth knowledge*, and rejoice itself in frequent thinking and speaking of him, instead of these idle and vain thoughts at the best, and empty discourses, wherein the most delight, and wear out the day. What is all knowledge but painted folly in comparison of this? Though thou hadst *Solomon*'s faculty to discourse of all plants, and have not the right knowledge of *this root of Jesse:* If thou wert singular in the knowledge of the stars, and course of the Heavens, and couldst walk through the spheres with a *Jacob's staff*, but ignorant of *this star of Jacob:* If thou knewest the histories of all time, and the life and death of all the most famous princes, and could rehearse them all, but dost not spiritually know and apply to thyself the death of *Jesus* as thy life, thou art still a wretched fool for them, and all thy knowledge with thee shall quickly perish. On the other side, if thy capacity or breeding hath denied thee the knowledge of all these things wherein men glory so much; yet do but learn *Christ crucified*, and what wouldst thou have more? That shall make thee happy for ever; for *this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent*[f].

Here St. *Paul* sets up his rest, *I determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified*[g]. "Whatsoever I knew besides, I resolved to be as if "I knew nothing besides this, the only knowledge "wherein I will rejoice myself, and which I will "labour to impart to others. I have tried and com- "pared the rest, and find them all unworthy of their "room beside this, and my whole soul too little "for this, and have past this judgment and sen- "tence on all. I have adjudged myself to deny all "other knowledge, and confined myself within this "circle, and I am not straitened. No, there is "room enough in it; it is larger than Heaven and

[f] John xvii. 3. [g] 1 Cor. ii. 2.

"earth, *Christ and him crucified*, the most des-
"pised and ignominious part, yet the sweetest and
"most comfortable part of all; the root, whence
"all our hopes of life and spiritual joys do spring."

But the most part of mankind hear this subject as a story; some are a little moved with the present sound of it, but they draw it not home into their hearts, to make it theirs, and to find salvation in it, but still cleave to sin, and love sin better than him that suffered for it.

But you whose hearts the Lord hath deeply humbled in the sense of sin, come to this depth of consolation and try it, that you may have experience of the sweetness and riches of it. Study this point thoroughly, and you will find it answer all, and quiet your consciences. Apply this *bearing of sin* by the Lord Jesus for you, for it is published and made known to you for this purpose. This is the genuine and true use of it, as of the *brazen serpent*, not emptily to gaze on the fabric of it, but to cure those that looked on it. When all that can be said is said against you, it is true, may you say, but it is satisfied for; he on whom I rest made it his, and did bear it for me. The person of Christ is of more worth than all men, yea, than all the creatures, and therefore his life was a full ransom for the greatest offender.

And for outward troubles and sufferings, which were the occasion of this doctrine in this place, they are all made exceeding light by the removal of this great pressure. "Let the Lord lay on me what he
"will, seeing he hath taken off my sin, and laid that
"on his own Son in my stead. I may suffer many
"things, but he hath born that for me which alone
"was able to make me miserable."

And you that have this persuasion, how will your hearts be taken up with his love, *Who thus loved you, as to give himself for you*, who interposed himself to bear off from you the stroke of everlasting death, and encountered all the wrath due to us, and went through with that great work, by reason of his

unspeakable love! Let him never go forth from my heart who for my sake refused to go down from the cross.

That we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness.] The Lord doth nothing in vain, hath not made the least of his works to no purpose; *In wisdom hath he made them all*, says the Psalmist[h], and that is not only in regard of their excellent frame and order, but of their end, which is a chief point of wisdom; so then to the right knowledge of this great work put into the hands of Jesus Christ, it is of special concern to understand what is its end.

This is the thing that his wisdom and love aimed at in that great undertaking, and therefore it will be our truest wisdom, and the truest evidence of our reflex love to intend the same thing; that in this *the same mind may be in us that was in Christ Jesus* in his suffering for us, and for this very end is it expressed, *That we being dead to sin, should live to righteousness.*

In this there are three things to be considered, 1. What this death and life is; 2. The intendment of it in the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ; 3. The effecting of it by them.

1*st*, What this death and life is. Now whatsoever it is, sure it is no small change that bears the name of the great and last natural change that we are subject to; a *death*, and then another kind of life succeeding to it; and in this the greatest part are mistaken, that they take any light alteration in themselves for true conversion.

A world of people are deluded with superficial moral changes in their life, some rectifying of their outward actions and course of life, and somewhat too in the temper and habit of their mind, far from reaching the bottom of nature's wickedness, and *laying the axe to the root of the tree*, it is such a work as men can make a shift with by themselves; but the renovation that the Spirit of God worketh

[h] Psal. civ. 24.

is like himself, it is so deep and total a work, that it is justly called by the name of the most substantial works and productions, *a new birth*, and more than that, *a new creation*, and here a *death* and a kind of life following it.

This *death to sin* supposes a former *living in it* and to it; and while a man does so, he is said indeed *to be dead in sin;* and yet withal this is true, that he lives in sin, as the apostle joins the expressions [i], *She that lives in pleasure is dead while she liveth* [k]; *dead in trespasses and sins*, and he adds, *wherein ye walked*, which imports a life, such an one as it is, and more expressly, *v.* 3, *We had our conversation in the lusts of our flesh.* Now thus to live in sin, is called to be dead in it, because in that condition man is indeed dead, in respect of that divine life of the soul, that happy being which it should have in union with God, for which it was made, and without which it had better not be at all. For that life, as it is different from its natural being, and a kind of life above it, so it is contrary to that corrupt being and life it hath in sin; and therefore to live in sin is to be dead in it, being a deprivement of that divine being, that life of the soul in God, in comparison whereof, not only the base life it hath in sin, but the very natural life it hath in the body, and that the body hath by it, is not worthy of the name of life. You see the body, when the thread of its union with the soul is cut, becomes not only straightway a motionless lump, but within a little time a putrified noisome carcase; and thus the soul by sin is cut off from God, who is its life, as is the soul of the body, it hath not only no moving faculty in good, but becomes full of rottenness and vileness, as the word is [l], *They are gone aside and become filthy.* The soul, by turning away from God, turns filthy; yet, as a man thus spiritually dead lives naturally so, because he acts and spends that natural life in the ways of sin, he is said, *to live in sin.* Yea, there is somewhat more in that expression than

[i] 1 Tim. v. 6. [k] Eph. ii. 1. [l] Psal. xiv 2.

the mere passing of his life in that way; for instead of that happy life his soul should have in God, he pleases himself in the miserable life of sin, that which is his death, as if it were the proper life of his soul: *living in it* imports that natural propension he hath to sin, and the continual delight he takes in it, as in his element, and living to it, as if that were the very end of his being. In that estate neither his body nor his mind stirreth without sin. Setting aside his manifest breaches of the law, those actions that are evidently and totally sinful; his natural actions, his eating and drinking; his religious actions, his praying, and hearing, and preaching, are sin at the bottom. And generally his heart is no other but a forge of sin; *every imagination*, every fiction of things framed there, *is only evil continually*[m], or every day, and all the day long, it is his very trade and life.

Now in opposition to this life of sin, living in it, and to it, a christian is said to *die to sin*, to be cut off or separated from it. In our miserable natural state there is as close an union betwixt us and sin, as betwixt our souls and bodies. It lives in us, and we in it, and the longer we live in that condition the more the union grows, and the harder it is to dissolve it; and it is as old as the union of soul and body; nor can any thing but the death that is here spoke of part them: and this death, in this relative sense, is mutual, in the work of conversion: sin dies, and the soul dies to sin, and these two are really one and the same. The Spirit of God kills both at one blow, sin in the soul, and the soul to sin; as the apostle says of himself and the world[n], each is crucified to the other.

And there are in it chiefly these two things that make the difference, 1. The solidity; and, 2. The universality of this change under this notion of death.

Many things may lie in a man's way betwixt him and the acting of divers sins, which possibly he af-

[m] Gen. vi. 5. [n] Gal. vi. 14.

fects most. Some restraints outward or inward may be upon him, the authority of others, or the fear of shame or punishment, or the check of an enlightened conscience; and though by reason of these, he commit not the sin he would, yet he *lives in it*, because he *loves* it, because he would commit it; as we say, the soul lives not so much where it animates, as where it loves: and generally that kind of metaphorical life, by which a man is said to live in any thing, hath its principal seat in the affection. That is the immediate link of the union in such a life; and the untying and death consists chiefly in the disengagement of the heart, breaking off the affection from it; *ye that love the Lord, hate evil*[o]. An unrenewed mind may have some temporary dislikes even of its beloved sins in cold blood, but it returns to like them within a while. A man may not only have times of cessation from his wonted way of sinning, but, by reason of the society wherein he is, and withdrawing of occasions to sin, and divers other causes, his very desire after it may seem to him to be abated, and yet he may be not dead to sin, but only asleep to it: and therefore, when a temptation backed with opportunity, and other inducing circumstances comes, and joggs him, he awakes, and arises and follows it.

A man may for a while distaste some meat he loves (possibly upon a surfeit) but he regains quickly his liking of it: every quarrel with sin, every fit of dislike to it, is not this hatred. Upon the lively representing the deformity of his sin to his mind, certainly a natural man may fall out with it; but these are but as the little jars of husband and wife, that are far from dissolving the marriage; it is not a fixed hatred, such as amongst the *Jews* inferred a divorce, if *thou hate her put her away*; and that is to die to it. As by a legal divorce the husband and wife are civilly dead one to another, in regard of the tie and use of marriage.

Again, some men's education and custom, and mo-

[o] Psal. xcvii. 10.

ral principles, may free them from the grossest kind of sins; yea, a man's temper may be averse from them, but they are alive to their own kind of sins, such as possibly are not so deformed in the common account, covetousness or pride, or hardness of heart, and either a hatred or disdain of the ways of holiness that are too strict for them, and exceed their size. Besides for the good of human society, and for the interest of his own church and people, God restrains many natural men from the height of wickedness, and gives them moral virtues. There be very many, and very common sins that more refined natures, it may be, are scarce tempted to; but as in their diet and apparel, and other things in their natural life, they have the same kind of being with other persons, though they are more neat and elegant; so in this living to sin, they live the same life with other ungodlly men, though with a little more delicacy.

They consider not, that the devils are not in themselves subject to, nor capable of many of those sins that are accounted grossest amongst men, and yet are greater rebels and enemies to God than men are.

But to be dead to sin goes deeper, and extends further than all these, namely, a most inward alienation of heart from sin, and most universal from all sin, and an antipathy to the most beloved sin. Not only doth a man in this case forbear sin, but he hates it, *I hate vain thoughts*[p], and not only doth he hate some sins, but all, *I hate every false way*[q]. A stroke at the heart, a wound given there, occasions the most certain and speedy death: for in this dying to sin, all the whole man of necessity dies to it; the mind dies to the device and study of sin, that vein and invention becomes dead; the hand dies to the acting of it; the ear to the delightful hearing of things profane and sinful; the tongue to the world's dialect of oaths and rotten speaking, and calumny and evil-speaking. This is the most

[p] Psal cxix. 113. [q] ver. 128.

common effect of the tongue's life in sin, the very natural heat of sin that exerts and vents itself most that way; the eye becomes dead to that intemperate look that *Solomon* speaks of, when he cautions us against *eyeing the wine when it is red, and well coloured in the cup*[r]. It is not taken with looking on the glittering skin of that *serpent*, till it *bite* and *sting*, as there he adds. It becomes also dead to that unchaste look that kindles fire in the heart, to which *Job* blindfolded and deadened his eyes, by an express compact and agreement with them; *I have made a covenant with mine eyes*[s].

The eye of a godly man is not fixed on the false sparkling of the world's pomp, honour and wealth. It is dead to them: being quite dazzled with a greater beauty. The grass looks fine in the morning, when it is set with those liquid pearls, the drops of dew that shine upon it; but if you can look but a little while on the body of the sun, and then look down again, the eye is as it were dead; it sees not that faint shining on the earth that it thought so gay before: and as the eye is blinded, and dies to it, so within a few hours that gaiety quite vanishes and dies itself.

Men think it strange that the godly are not fond of their diet, that their appetite is not stirred with desire of their delights and dainties; they know not that such as be christians indeed, are dead to those things, and the best dishes that are set before a dead man give him not a stomach. The godly man's *throat is cut to those meats*, as *Solomon* advises, in another subject[t]. But why may not you be a little more sociable to follow the fashion of the world, and take a share with your neighbours, may some say, without so precisely and narrowly examining every thing? It is true, says the christian, that the time was when I advised as little with conscience as others, but sought myself, and pleaded myself as they do, and looked no further; but that was when *I was alive to those ways;* but now truly

[r] Prov. xxiii. 31. [s] Job xxxi. 1. [t] Prov. xxiii. 2.

I am dead to them; and can you look for activity and conversation from a dead man; the pleasures of sin wherein I lived, are still the same, but I am not the same. Are you such a sneak and a fool, says the natural man, as to bear affronts, and swallow them, and say nothing? Can you suffer to be abused so by such and such a wrong? Indeed, says the christian again, I could once have resented an injury as you, or another, and had somewhat of that you call high-heartedness, when I was alive after your fashion; but now that humour is not only something cooled, but it is killed in me. It is cold dead, as ye say, and a greater spirit, I think, than my own, hath taught me another lesson, hath made me both deaf and dumb that way, and hath given me a new vent, and another language, and another party to speak to on such occasions[u], *They that seek my hurt, speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long.* What doth he in this case? *But I as a deaf man heard not, and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth*, and why? *for in thee, O Lord, do I hope.* And for this deadness that you despise, I have learnt it of him that died for me, *who when he was reviled, reviled not again.*

This is the true character of a christian; he is *dead to sin*: but alas! where is this christian to be found? And yet thus is every one, that truly partakes of Christ; he is dead to sin really. Hypocrites have an historical kind of death, like this, as players in tragedies. Those players have loose bags of blood that receive the wound: so the hypocrite, in some externals, and it may be, in that which is as near him as any outward thing, his purse, he may suffer some bloodshed of that for Christ; but this death to sin is not a swooning fit, that one may recover out of again; the apostle[x], adds, *that he is buried.*

But this is an unpleasant subject to talk thus of death and burial; the very name of death, in the

[u] Psal. xxxviii. 12, 13, 14, 15. [x] Rom. vi. 4.

softest sense it can have, makes a sour melancholy discourse. It is so indeed, if you take it alone, if there were not, instead of the life that is lost, a far better one immediately following; but so it is here, *living unto righteousness* succeeds *dying to sin.*

That which makes natural death so affrightful, the *king of terrors*, as Job calls it[b], is mainly this faint belief and assurance of the resurrection and glory to come; and without some lively apprehension of this, all mens moral resolutions and discourses are too weak cordials against this fear. They may set a good face on it, and speak big, and so cover the fear they cannot cure; but certainly they are a little ridiculous, that would persuade men to be content to die, by reasoning from the necessity and unavoidableness of it, which, taken alone, rather may beget a desperate discontent, than a quiet compliance. The very weakness of that argument is, that it is too strong, *durum telum.* That of company is fantastic; it may please the imagination, but satisfies not the judgment: nor are the miseries of life, though somewhat more proper, a full persuasive to meet death without reluctance; the oldest, the most decripit, and most diseased persons, yet naturally fall not out with life, but could have a mind to it still; and the very truth is this, the worst cottage any dwells in, they are loth to go out of, till they know of a better. And the reason why that which is so hideous to others, was so sweet to martyrs[y], and other godly men that have heartily embraced death, and welcomed it, though in very terrible shapes, was, because they had firm assurance of immortality beyond it. The ugly death's head, when the light of glory shines through the holes of it, is comely and lovely. To look upon death as eternity's birth-day, is that which makes it not only tolerable, but amiable. *Hic dies, postremus æterni natalis est,* is the word I admire more than any other that ever dropt from a heathen.

Thus here, the strongest inducement to this death,

[b] Chap. xviii. 14. [y] Heb. xi. 35.

is the true notion and contemplation of this life, unto which it sets us over; it is most necessary to represent this, for a *natural man* hath as great an aversion every whit from this figurative death, this *dying to sin*, as from natural death; and there is the more necessity of persuading him to this, because his consent is necessary to it. No man dies this death to sin unwillingly, although no man is naturally willing to it; much of this death consists in a man's consenting thus to die: and this is not only a lawful, but a laudable, yea a necessary self-murder. *Mortify therefore, your members which are upon the earth,* says the Apostle[z]. Now no sinner will be content to *die to sin*, if that were all; but if it be *passing* to a more excellent *life*, then he gaineth; and it were a folly not to seek this death. It was a strange power of *Plato's* discourse of the soul's immortality that moved a young man upon reading it, to throw himself into the sea, that he might leap through it to that immortality: but truly, were this life of God, this *life to righteousness*, and the excellency and delight of it known, it would gain many minds to this death whereby we step into it.

1. There is a necessity of a new being to be the principle of new acting and motion, as the apostle says, *while ye served sin, ye were free from righteousness*[a]. So it is equally true, while ye were alive to sin ye were dead to righteousness; but there is a new breath of life from Heaven, breathed on the soul. Then lives the soul indeed, when it is one with God, and sees *light in his light*[b], it hath a spiritual knowledge of him, and therefore sovereignly loves him, and delights in his will; and that is indeed, *to live unto righteousness*, which in a comprehensive sense takes in all the frame of a christian life, and all the duties of it towards God and towards men.

By this new nature the very natural motion of the soul so taken, is obedience to God, and walking in the paths of righteousness, it can no more live

[z] Col. iii. 5. [a] Rom. vi. 20. [b] Psal. xxxii. 9.

in the habit and ways of sin than a man can live under water. Sin is not the christian's element, it is too gross for his renewed soul, as the water is for his body. He may fall into it, but he cannot breathe in it; cannot take delight, and continue to live in it; but his delight is *in the law of the Lord*[b]. That is the walk that his soul refreshes itself in; he loves it entirely, and loves it most, where it most crosses the remainders of corruption that are in him; he bends the strength of his soul to please God; and aims wholly at that. It takes up his thoughts early, and late, he hath no other purpose in his being, and living: but only to honour his Lord, that is *to live to righteousness.* He doth not make a bye-work of it, a study for his spare hours; no, it is his main business, his all. *In this law doth he meditate day and night*[c]. This life, like the natural one, is seated in the heart, and from thence diffuses itself to the whole man; he loves righteousness, and *receiveth the truth* (as the apostle speaks) *in the love of it.* A natural man may do many things, that for their shell and outside are righteous: but he lives not to righteousness, because his heart is not possessed and ruled with the love of it. Whereas this life makes the godly man delight to walk uprightly and to speak of righteousness, his language and ways carry the resemblance of his heart[d]. I know it is easiest to act that part of religion that is in the tongue; but the christian ought not for that to be spiritually dumb. Because some birds are taught to speak, men do not for that give it over, and leave off to speak. *The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment,* and his feet strive to keep pace with his tongue, which gives evidence of its unfeignedness. *None of his steps shall slide,* or he shall not stagger in his steps, but that which is betwixt these, is the common spring of both. *The law of God is in his heart*[e], and from thence, as

[b] Psal. i. 2. [c] Psal. i. 2. [d] Psal. xxxvii. 30, 31.
[e] Psal. xxxvii. 30, 31.

Solomon says, *are the issues of his life*[f]. That law in his heart, is the principle of this living to righteousness.

2. The second thing here is the design or intention of Christ by his sufferings and death, to produce in us this death, and life, *he bare sin*, and died for it, that we might die to it;

Out of some conviction of the consequence of sin, many have a confused desire to be justified, to have sin pardoned, and they look no further; they think not on the importance and necessity of sanctification, the nature whereof is expressed by this *dying to sin* and *living to righteousness.*

But here we see, that sanctification is necessary as inseparably connected with justification, not only as its companion, but as its end; which in some kind raises it above the other; we see that it was the thing which God eyed, and intended in taking away the guiltiness of sin, that we might be renewed, and sanctified: If we compare them in point of time, and look backward, holiness was always necessary unto happiness; but satisfying for sin and the pardon of it, was made necessary by sin; or if we look forward, the estate we are appointed to, and for which we are delivered from wrath, is an estate of perfect holiness. When we reflect upon that great work of redemption, we see it aimed at there, *Redeemed to be holy*[g]. And if we go yet higher to the very spring, the decree of election, with regard to that it is said[h], *Chosen before, that we should be holy;* and the end it shall suit the design, *Nothing shall enter into the new Jerusalem, that is defiled,* or unholy; nothing but perfect purity is there; not a spot of sinful pollution, not a *wrinkle* of the old *man.* For this end was that great work undertaken by the Son of God, that he might frame out of polluted mankind a new holy generation to his Father, that might compass his throne in the life of glory, and give him pure praises, and behold his face in that eternity. Now, for

[f] Prov. iv. 3. [g] Eph. v. 25, 26. Tit. ii. 14. [h] Eph. i. 4.

this end it was needful, according to the all-wise purpose of the Father, that the guiltiness of sin, and sentence of death should be once removed, and thus the burden of that lay upon Christ's shoulders on the cross; and that done, it is further necessary, that souls so delivered be likewise purged and renewed; for they are designed to perfection of holiness in the end, and it must begin here.

Yet it is not possible to persuade men of this, that Christ had this in his eye and purpose when he was lifted up upon the cross, and looked upon the whole company of those his Father had given him to save, that he would redeem them to be a number of holy persons. We would be redeemed, (who is there would not?) but he would have his redeemed ones holy; and they that are not true to this his end, but cross and oppose him in it, may hear of redemption long, and often, but little to their comfort. Are you resolved still to abuse and delude yourselves? Well, whether you will believe it or no, this is once more told you; there is unspeakable comfort in the death of Christ, but it belongs only to those that *are dead to sin, and alive to righteousness.* This circle shuts out the impenitent world: there it closes, and cannot be broke through; but all that are penitent are by their effectual calling lifted into it, translated from that accursed condition wherein they were: so then if you will live in your sins, you may; but then resolve withal to bear them yourselves, for Christ in his bearing of sin, meant the benefit of none, but such as in due time are thus dead, and thus alive with him.

3. But then in the third place, Christ's sufferings and death effect all this. 1. As the exemplary cause the lively contemplation of Christ crucified, is the most powerful of all thoughts, to separate the heart and sin. But 2. besides this working as a moral cause, Christ is the effective natural cause of this death, and life; for he is one with the believer, and there is a real influence of his death and life in-

to their souls. This mysterious union of Christ and the believer, is that whereon both their justification and sanctification and the whole frame of their salvation and happiness depends; and in this particular view the apostle still insists on it, speaking of Christ and believers as one in his death and resurrection, *crucified with him, dead with him, buried with him, and risen with him*[i].

Being arisen, he applies his death to those he died for, and by it kills the life of sin in them, and so is avenged on it for its being the cause of his death; according to that of the[k]: *Raise me up that I may requite them.* He infuses, and then actuates and stirs up that faith and love in them, by which they are united to him; and these work powerfully in producing this change.

3. Faith looks so stedfastly on its suffering Saviour, that, as they say[l], it makes the soul like him, assimilates and conforms it to his death, as the apostle speaks. That which papists fabulously say of some of their saints, that they received the impression of the wounds of Christ in their body, is true in a spiritual sense of the soul of every one that is indeed a saint and a believer: it takes the very print of his death, by beholding him, and *dies to sin;* and then takes that of his rising again, and *lives to righteousness;* as it applies it to *justify,* so to *mortify,* drawing virtue from it. Thus said one, "Christ "aimed at this in all those sufferings that with so "much love he went through; and shall I disap"point him, and not serve his end?"

4. That other powerful grace of love joins in this work with faith; for love desires nothing more than likeness and conformity: though it be a painful resemblance, so much the better and fitter to testify love, therefore it will have the soul die with him that died for it, and the very same kind of death; *I am crucified with Christ,* says the great apostle[m]. The love of Christ in the soul takes the very nails

[i] Rom. vi. 4, &c. [k] Psal. xli. 10.
[l] Intellectus fit illud quod intelligit. [m] Gal. ii. 20.

that fastened him to the cross, and crucifies the soul to the world, and to sin. *Love is strong as death*, particularly in this; the strongest and liveliest body, when death seizes it, must yield, and so becomes motionless, though it was so vigorous before: and the soul that is most active and unwearied in sin, when this love seizes it, is killed to sin; and as death separates a man from his dearest friends, and society, this love breaks all its ties and friendship with sin. Generally, as *Plato* hath it, love takes away one's living in themselves, and transfers it into the party loved; but the divine love of Christ doth it in the truest and highest manner.

By whose stripes ye were healed.] The misery of fallen man, and the mercy of his deliverance, are both of them such a depth, that no one expression, yea, no variety of expressions added one to another, can reach their bottom. Here we have divers very significant ones: 1. The guiltiness of sin as an intolerable burden, pressing the soul and sinking it; and that transferred and laid on a stronger back, *he bare*. Then, 2. The same wretchedness under the notion of a strange disease, by all other means incurable, *healed by his stripes*. And, 3. Again represented by the forlorn condition of a sheep wandering, and our salvation to be found only in the love and wisdom of our great Shepherd. And all these are borrowed from that sweet and clear prophecy[n].

The polluted nature of man is no other but a bundle of desperate diseases: he is spiritually dead, as the scriptures often teach. Now this contradicts not, nor at all lessens the matter; but only because this misery, justly called *death*, is in a subject animated with a natural life, therefore, so considered, it may bear the name and sense of sickness or wounds: and therefore it is gross misprision, and they are as much out in their argument as in their conclusion, that would extract out of these expressions any evidence of remains of spiritual life or good in our corrupted nature. But they are not

[n] Isa. liii.

worthy the contest, though vain heads think to argue themselves into life, and are seeking that life by logic in miserable nature, that they should seek by faith in Jesus Christ, namely, in these *his stripes, by which we are healed.*

It were a large task to name our spiritual maladies, how much more severally to unfold their natures; such a multitude of corrupt false principles in the mind that, as gangrenes, do spread themselves through the soul, and defile the whole man; that total gross blindness and unbelief in spiritual things, and that stone of the heart, hardness and impenitency, lethargies of senselessness and security; and then (for there be such complications of spiritual diseases in us, as in naturals are altogether impossible) such burning fevers of inordinate affections, desires of lust, and malice, and envy, such racking and tormenting cares of covetousness, and *feeding on earth and ashes*, as the prophet speaks in another case[o], according to the depraved appetite that accompanies some diseases: such tumours of pride and self-conceit that break forth, as filthy botches in mens words, and carriage one with another! and in a word, what a wonderful disorder must needs be in the natural soul, by the frequent interchanges and fight of contrary passions within it; and, besides all these, how many deadly wounds do we receive from without by the temptations of Satan and the world: we entertain them, and by weapons, with which they furnish us, we willingly wound ourselves, as the apostle says of them *who will be rich, they fall into divers snares and noisome lusts, and pierce themselves through with many sorrows*[p].

Did we see it, no infirmary or hospital was ever so full of loathsome and miserable spectacles, as in a spiritual sense, our wretched nature is in any one of us apart: how much more when multitudes of us are met together? But our evils are hid from us, and we perish miserably in a dream of happiness. That makes up and compleats our wretchedness

[o] Isa. xliv. 20. [p] 1 Tim. vi. 9.

that we feel it not with our other diseases; and this makes it worse still. This was the church's disease[q], *Thou sayest I am rich, and knowest not that thou art poor*, &c. We are usually full of complaints of trifling griefs that are of small moment, and think not on, nor feel our dangerous maladies; as he who shewed a physician his sore finger, but the physician told him, he had more need to think on the cure of a dangerous impostume within him, which he perceived by looking to him, though himself did not feel it.

In dangerous maladies or wounds, there be these evils, a tendency to death, a fear of it, an apprehension of its terrors, and the present distemper of the body by these; and all this is in sin. 1. There is the guiltiness of sin binding over the soul to death, the most frightful eternal death. 2. The terror of conscience in the apprehension of that death or wrath that is the consequent and end of sin. 3. The raging and prevailing power of sin, which is the ill habit and distemper of the soul: but Christ's stripes, and that blood that issued from them, are a sound cure applied unto the soul. They take away the guiltiness of sin, and death deserved, and free us from our engagement to those everlasting scourgings and lashes of the wrath of God; and they are likewise the only cure of those present terrors and pangs of conscience, arising from the sense of that wrath, and sentence of death upon the soul. Our iniquities that met on his back, laid it open to the rod, which in itself was free; those hands that never wrought iniquity, and those feet that never declined from the way of righteousness, yet for our works and wandrings were pierced; and that tongue dropped with vinegar and gall on the cross, that never spoke a guileful nor sinful word. The blood of those stripes are that balm issuing from that tree of life so pierced, that can only give ease to the conscience, and heal the wounds of it; and they deliver from the power of sin, working by their influence a loathing of sin, that was

[q] Rev. iii. 17.

the cause of them; they cleanse out the vitious humours of our corrupt nature, by opening that issue of repentance, *They shall look on him, and mourn over him, whom they have pierced*[r].

Now, to the end it may thus cure, it must be applied; it is the only receipt, but it must be received for healing. The most sovereign medicines cure not in another manner, and therefore still their first letter is R, *Recipe*, take such a thing.

This is amongst those wonders of that great work, that the sovereign Lord of all, that binds and looses at his pleasure the influences of heaven, and the power and workings of all the creatures, would himself in our flesh be thus bound, the only Son bound as a slave, and scourged as a malefactor! and his willing obedience made this an acceptable and expiating sacrifice; amongst the rest of his sufferings, *He gave his back to the smiters*[s].

Now, it cannot be, that any that is thus healed, reflecting upon this cure, can again take any constant delight in sin. It is impossible so far to forget both the grief it bred themselves, and their Lord, as to make a new agreement with it, and take pleasure to live in it.

His stripes.] Turn your thoughts every one of you to consider this. You that are not healed, that you may be healed; and you that are, apply it still to perfect the cure, in that part wherein it is gradual, and not compleat; and for the *ease* you have found, bless and love him who endured so much uneasiness to that end. There is a sweet mixture of sorrow and joy in contemplating these stripes; sorrow, sure by sympathy, that they were his stripes, and joy, that they were our healing. Christians are too little mindful and sensible of this, and it may be somewhat guilty of that great fault mentioned[t], *They knew not that I healed them.*

[r] Zech. xii. 10. [s] Isa. l. 6. [t] Hos. xi. 3.

Ver. 25. *For ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned to the shepherd and bishop of your souls.*

In these few words we have a brief and yet clear representation of the wretchedness of our natural condition, and our happiness in Christ. The resemblance is borrowed from the same place in the prophet[a].

Not to press the comparison, and, as it is too usual in such comments as these, to strain it beyond the purpose in our lost estate; this is all, or the main circumstance wherein the resemblance with sheep holds, our *wandring*, as forlorn, and exposed to destruction, as a sheep that is strayed and wandred from the fold. So it imports indeed the loss of a better condition, the loss of the safety and happiness of the soul, of that good which is proper to it, as the suitable good of the brute creature here named, is safe and good pasture.

That we may know there is none exempt in nature from the guiltiness and misery of this wandring, the prophet is express in the universality of it, *All we have gone astray:* and though the Apostle here applies it in particular to his brethren, yet it falls not amiss to any other, *Ye were as sheep going astray:* yea, the prophet there to the collective universal adds a distributive, *every man to his own way*, or a man to his way. They agree in this, that they all wander, though they differ in their several ways. There is an inbred propension to stray in them all, more than in sheep that are creatures naturally wandring, for each man hath his own way of it.

And this is our folly, that we flatter ourselves by comparison, and every one is pleased with himself because he is free from some wanderings of others; not considering that he is a wanderer too, though in another way; he hath his way as those he looks on have theirs. And as men agree in wandering, though they differ in their way, so those

[a] Isaiah liii. 6.

ways agree in this, that they lead unto misery, and shall end in that. Think you there is no way to Hell but the way of open profaneness? Yes sure, many a way there is that seems smooth, and *clean in a man's own eyes*, and yet will end in condemnation. Truth is but one, error endless and interminable; as we say of natural life and death, so may we say of spiritual, the way to life is one, but there are many out of it; *Lethi mille aditus*. Each one hath not opportunity nor ability for every sin, or every degree of sin, but each sins after his own mode and power[b].

Thy tongue, it may be, wanders not in the common path-road of oaths and curses, yet it wanders in secret calumnies, in detraction and defaming of others, though so conveyed as it scarce appears: or, if thou speak them not, yet thou art pleased to hear them. It wanders in trifling away the precious hours of irrecoverable time, with vain unprofitable babblings in thy converse, or, if thou art much alone, or in company much silent, yet, is not thy foolish mind still hunting vanity, following this self-pleasing design or the other, and seldom, and very slightly, if at all, conversant with God, and the things of heaven? which although they alone have the truest, and the highest pleasure in them, yet to thy carnal mind are tasteless and unsavory. There is scarce any thing so light and childish that thou wilt not more willingly and liberally bestow thy retired thoughts on, than upon those excellent incomparable delights. Oh! the foolish heart of man, when it may seem deep and serious, how often is it at *Domitian's* exercise in his study, *catching flies*.

Men account little of the wandering of their hearts, and yet truly, that is most of all to be considered; for *from thence are the issues of life*[c]. It is the heart that hath forgotten God, and is roving after vanity. This causes all the errors of mens words and actions. A wandring heart makes wan-

[b] Isa. xl. 20. [c] Prov. iv. 23.

dring eyes, feet and tongue. It is the leading wanderer that misleads all the rest; and as we are here called *straying sheep*, so within the heart itself of each of us, there is as it were a whole wandring flock, a multitude of fictions[d], ungodly devices, the word that signifies the evil of the thought in *Hebrew*, here דע from דוע is from that which is feeding of a flock, and it likewise signifies wandring; and so these meet in our thoughts, they are a great flock, and a wandring flock. This is the natural freedom of our thoughts; they are free to wander from God and Heaven, and carry us to perdition: and we are guilty of many pollutions this way that we never acted. Men are less sensible of heart wickedness, if it break not forth; but it is far more active in sin than any of the senses, or the whole body. The motion of spirits is far swifter than of bodies; it can make a greater progress in any of these wandrings in one hour, than the body is able to overtake in many days.

When the body is tied to attendance in the exercises wherein we are now employed, yet know you not? (it is so much the worse, if you do not know, and feel it, and bewail it,) Know you not, I say, that the heart can take its liberty, and leave you nothing but a carcase? This the unrenewed heart doth continually: *They come and sit before me as my people, but their heart is after their covetousness*[e]. It hath another way to go, another God to wait on.

But are now returned.] Whatsoever are the several ways of our straying, all our wandring is the aversion of the heart from God; whence of necessity follows a continual unsettledness and disquiet; the mind is *as a wave of the sea, tossed to and fro with the wind;* it tumbles from one sin and vanity to another, and finds no rest; as a sick person tosses from one side to another, and from one part of his bed to another, and perhaps changes his bed, in hope of ease, but still it is further off; thus is the

[d] Gen. viii. 21. [e] Ezek. xxxiii. 31.

soul in all its wandrings: but shift and change as it will, no rest shall it find until it come to this *returning*[g]. *Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way? Thou shalt be ashamed of Egypt as thou wast of Assyria.* Nothing but sorrow and shame till you change all those ways for this one. *Return, O Israel, says the Lord, if thou wilt return, return unto me.* It is not changing one of your own ways for another that will profit you; but *in returning to me* is your salvation.

Seeing we find in our own experience, besides the woful end of our wandrings, the present perplexity and disquiet of them, why are we not persuaded to this, to give up with them all? *Return unto thy rest, O my soul,* says *David*[h], this were our wisdom.

But is not that God, in whom we expect rest, incensed against us for our wandering? and is he not, being offended, *a consuming fire?* True, but this is the way to find acceptance and peace, and satisfying comforts in returning. Come first to this shepherd of souls Jesus Christ, and by him come unto the Father; *No man comes unto the Father,* says he, *but by me.* This is *via regia,* the high and right way of returning unto God[i]. *I am the good shepherd,* and *v.* 9. *I am the door, by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved:* but if he miss this door, he shall miss salvation too. *Ye are returned,* says the Apostle, *unto the shepherd and bishop of your souls.*

There be three things necessary to restore us to our happiness, whence we have departed in our wanderings: 1. To take away the guiltiness of those former wanderings. 2. To reduce us into the way again. 3. To keep and lead us in it.

Now all these are performable by this great Shepherd, and by him only. 1. He did satisfy for the offence of our wanderings, and so remove our guiltiness; he himself, the Shepherd, became a sacrifice for his flock, a sheep or spotless lamb, as[k]: *We like*

[g] Jer. ii. 36. [h] Psal. cxvi. 7. [i] Joh. x. 11. [k] Isa. liii. 6.

sheep have gone astray, and immediately after our straying is mentioned, it is added, *The Lord laid, or made meet on him, the iniquity of us all*, of all our strayings; and *v.* 7. he that is our Shepherd, the same is the lamb for sacrifice: so our Apostle, chap. i. *We are redeemed not by silver and gold*, &c. *but by the precious blood of Christ; as of a Lamb without blemish, and without spot*[l]. *He is the good Shepherd that lays down his life for his sheep.* Men think not on this, many of them that have some thoughts of returning and amendment, think not that there is a satisfaction due for past wanderings; and therefore they pass by Christ, and consider not the necessity of returning to him, and by him to the Father.

2. He brings them back into the way of life, *ye are returned:* but think not it is by their own knowledge and skill that they discover their error, and find out the right path, and by their own strength that they return into it. No, if we would contest grammaticisms, the word here is passive, *ye are returned*, reduced, or caused to return: but this truth hangs not on so weak notions as are often used, either for or against it. In that prophecy[m], *I will seek, and bring again*, &c[n]. *He restoreth or returneth my soul.* And that this is the work of this Shepherd the Lord Jesus, God-man, is clearly and frequently taught in the Gospel. He came for this very end; it was his errand and business in the world, *to seek and to save that which was lost.* And thus it is represented in the parable, he *goes after that which is lost until he find it*, and then having found it, doth not only show it the way, and say to it, return, and so leave it to come after, but *he lays it on his shoulder*, and brings it home; and notwithstanding all his pains, instead of complaining against it for wandring, he rejoices in that he hath found and recovered it; *he lays it on his shoulder rejoicing*[o]. And in this there is as much of the resem-

[l] Joh. x. [m] Ezek. xxxiv. 16. [n] Psal. xxiii. 3.
[o] Luke xv. 4. 5.

blance as in any other thing Lost man can no more return unsought, than a sheep that wandereth, which is observed of all creatures to have least of that skill. Men may have some confused thoughts of returning; but they cannot know the way and come home unless they be sought out. This therefore is *David's* suit[p], though acquainted with the fold, *I have gone astray like a lost sheep; Lord seek thy servant.* This did our great and good Shepherd, through those difficult ways he was to pass, for finding us; wherein he not only hazarded, but really laid down his life; and those shoulders that did bear the iniquity of our wandering by expiation, upon the same doth he bear, and bring us back from it by effectual conversion.

3. He keeps and leads us on in that way, into which he hath reduced us; he leaves us not again to try our own skill, if we can walk to Heaven alone, being set into the path of it; but he still conducts us in it by his own hand, and that is the cause of our persisting in it, and attaining the blessed end of it. *He returneth my soul*, says the psalmist, and that is not all, he adds, *he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake;* by those paths are the *green pastures* meant, and the *still waters* that he speaks of[q]. And thus we may judge, whether we are of his flock. Are we *led in the paths of righteousness?* do *we delight ourselves in him*, and his ways? Are they the proper refreshment of our souls? Do we find *his word sweet unto our taste?* Are we taken with *the green pastures* in it, and the crystal streams of consolations that glide through it? Can we discern *his voice*, and does it draw our hearts, so that we follow it?

The shepherd and bishop.] It was the stile of kings to be called shepherds; and it is the dignity of the ministers of the gospel, to have both these names: but this great Shepherd and Bishop, is peculiarly worthy of these names, as supreme; he alone is the universal Shepherd and Bishop; and

[p] Psal. cxix. ult. [q] Psal. xxiii. 2, 3. [r] Joh. x. 27.

none but an antichrist, that makes himself as Christ, that kills and destroys the flock, will assume this title that belongs only to the Lord, the great owner of his flock. He himself is their great Shepherd and Bishop: all shepherds and bishops that are truly such have their function and place from him, they hold of him, and follow his rules and example, in their inspection of the flock. It were the happiness of kingdoms, if magistrates and kings would set him, his love, meekness and equity before their eyes in their government. All those that are properly his bishops, are especially obliged to study this pattern, to warm their affections to the flock, and excite a tender care of their salvation, by looking on this *archbishop* and *arch-shepherd* (as our Apostle calls him) and in their measure, to follow his footsteps, spending their life and strength in seeking the good of his sheep, considering that they are subordinately shepherds of souls, that is, in dispensing spiritual things; so far the title is communicable.

The Lord Jesus is supremely and singularly such, they under him are shepherds of souls, because their diligence concerns the soul, which excludes not the body in spiritual respects, as it is capable of things spiritual and eternal, by its union with the soul. But Christ is sovereign shepherd of souls above all, and singular, in that he not only teaches them the doctrine of salvation, but purchased salvation for them, and reaches the soul powerfully, which ministers by their own power cannot do. He lays hold on it, and reduces, and leads it, and causes it to walk in his ways. In this sense it agrees to him alone, as supreme, in the incommunicable sense.

And from his conduct, power and love, flows all the comfort of his flock, when they consider their own folly and weakness. This alone gives them confidence, that his hand guides them, and they believe his strength is far surpassing that of the roaring lion[s]. His wisdom, in knowing their particular

[s] Joh. x. 28, 29, 30.

state, and their weakness, and his tender love pitying them, and applying himself to it. Other shepherds, even faithful ones, may mistake, and not know the way of leading them in some particulars, and they may be sometimes wanting in that tender affection that they owe, or if they have that, yet are not able to bear them up, and support them powerfully: but this Shepherd is perfect in all these[t]. The young and weak christian, or the elder at weak times, when they are big and heavy with some inward exercise of mind, which shall bring forth advantage and peace afterwards to them; them he *leads gently*, and uses them with the tenderness that their weakness requires.

And in the general, he provides for his flock, and heals them when they are any way hurt, and washes and makes them fruitful; so that they are as that flock, described[u], they are comely, but their Shepherd much more: he is *formosi pecoris custos, formosior ipse.* They are given him in the Father's purpose and choice, and so they that return, even while they wander, *are sheep* in some other sense than the rest that perish. They are, in the secret love of election, of Christ's sheepfold, though not as yet actually brought into it: but when his time comes, wheresoever they wander, and how far off soever, even those that have strayed most, yet he reduces them, and rejoices Heaven with their return, and leads them till he bring them to partake of the joy that is there. That is the end of the way wherein he guides them[x], *They hear my voice, and follow me*, and they shall never repent of having done so. To follow him is to follow life; for *he is the life*[y]. And he is in that glory which we desire. And where would we be, if not there *where he is*, who at his parting from the world said, *where I am there they shall be also?* To this happy meeting and heavenly abode, may God, of his infinite mercy bring us, through *Jesus Christ our Lord.* Amen.

[t] Isa. xl. 11. [u] Cant. iv. 2. [x] Joh. x. 27, 28.]
[y] Joh. xiv. 6.

CHAP. III.

Ver. 1. *Likewise ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands: that if any one obey not the word, they also, without the word, may be won by the conversation of the wives.*

THE *tabernacle of the sun,* is set high in the Heavens, but it is, that it may have influence below upon the earth: and the *word of God,* that is spoke of there immediately after, as being many ways like it, holds resemblance in this particular; it is a sublime heavenly light, and yet descends, in its use, to the lives of men, in the variety of their stations; to warm and to enlighten, to regulate their affections and actions in whatsoever course of life they are called to. By a perfect revolution or circuit, (as there it is said of the sun) it visits all ranks and estates[a], *Its going forth is from the end of Heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it, and there is nothing hid from the heat of it.* This *word* disdains not to teach the very servants, in their low condition and employments, how to behave themselves, and sets before them no meaner example than that of Jesus Christ, which is the highest of all examples; and here the Apostle proceeds to give rules adapted to that relation, which is the main one in families, *husbands* and *wives:* for the order it is indifferent, yet, possibly, he begins here at the wives, because his former rules were given to inferiors, to subjects and servants; and the duty he commends particularly here to them, is *subjection; likewise ye wives be in subjection,* &c.

After men have said all they can, and much it may be to little purpose, in running the parallel between these two states of life, marriage and celibacy, the result will be found, I conceive, all things being truly estimated, very little odds, even in na-

[a] Psal. xix. 6.

tural respects, in the things themselves, saving only as the particular condition of persons, and the hand of divine providence turns the balance the one way or other: and the writing of satires against either, or panegyrics on the one in prejudice of the other, is but a caprice of mens mind, according to their own humour: but in respect of religion, the Apostle having scanned the subject to the full, leaves it indifferent, only requiring in those that are so engaged, hearts as disengaged as may be, *that they that marry be as if they married not, &c*[b]. Within a while it will be all one, as he adds that grave reason, *for the fashion* [σχῆμα] *of this world passeth*, it is but a pageant, a show of an hour long [παράγει] *goes by*, and is no more seen; thus the great pomps and solemnities of marriages of kings and princes in former times, where are they? Oh! how unseemly is it to have an immortal soul drowned in the esteem and affection of any thing that perishes, and to be cold and indifferent in seeking after a good that will last as long as itself. Aspire to that good which is the only match for the soul, that close union with God which cannot be dissolved; which he calls an everlasting marriage[c], that will make you happy, either with the other, or without it. All the happiness of the most excellent persons, and the very top of all affection and prosperity meeting in human marriages, are but a dark and weak representation of the solid joy that is in that mysterious divine union of the spirit of man with the *Father of Spirits*, from whom it issues. But this by the way.

The common spring of all mutual duties, on both sides, is to be supposed *love:* that peculiar conjugal love, that makes them one, will infuse such sweetness into the authority of the husband, and obedience of the wife, as will make their lives harmonious; like the sound of a well tuned instrument: whereas without that, having such an universal conjuncture of interest in all their affairs, they cannot

[b] 1 Cor. vii. 29. 31. [c] Hos. ii. 19.

escape frequent contests and discords; which is a sound more unpleasant than the jarring of untuned strings to an exact ear. And this should be considered in the choice, that it be not, as it is too often (which causeth so many domestic ills) contracted only as a bargain of outward advantages, but as an union of hearts: and where this is not, and there is something wanting in this point of affection, there, if the parties, or either of them, have any saving knowledge of God, and access to him in prayer, they will be earnest suitors for his help in this, that his hand may set right what no other can; that he who is love itself may infuse that mutual love into their hearts now, which they should have sought sooner. And they that sensibly want this, and yet seek it not of him, what wonder is it, though they find much bitterness and discontent; yea where they agree, if it be only in natural affection, their observance of the duties required is not by far either so comfortable and pleasing, or so sure and lasting, as when it ariseth from a religious and christian love in both that will cover many failings, and take things by the best side.

Love is the prime duty in both, the basis of all: but because the particular character of it, as proper to the wife, is conjugal obedience and subjection, therefore that is usually specified[d], *Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord:* so here. Now, if it be such obedience as ought to arise from a special kind of love, then the wife would remember this, that it must not be constrained unchearful obedience: and the husband would remember, that he ought not to require base and servile obedience; for both these are contrary to that love, whereof this obedience must carry the true tincture and relish, as flowing from it; there it will hold right, where love commands and love obeys.

This subjection as all other, is qualified thus, that it be *in the Lord.* His authority is primitive, and

[d] Eph. v. 12.

binds first, and all others have their patents and privileges from him; therefore he is supremely, and absolutely to be observed in all. If the husband would draw the wife to an irreligious course of life and looseness, he is not to be followed in this, but in all things indifferent this obedience must hold; which forbids not neither a modest advice and representation to the husband of that which is more convenient: but that done, a submissive yielding to the husband's will is the suiting of this rule. Yea possibly the husband may not only imprudently, but unlawfully will that, which, if not in its own nature a thing unlawful, the wife by reason of his will may obey lawfully, yea could not lawfully disobey.

Now, though this subjection was a fundamental law of pure nature, and came from that hand that made all things in perfect order, yet sin, which hath imbittered all human things with a curse, hath disrelished this subjection, and made it taste somewhat of a punishment[c], and that as a suitable punishment of the woman's abuse of that power she had with the man, to the drawing of him to disobedience against God.

The bitterness in this subjection arises from the corruption of nature in both; in the wife a perverse desire rather to command, or at least a repining discontent at the obligation to obey; and this is increased by the disorder, and imprudence, and harshness of husbands, in the use of their authority.

But in a christian, the conscience of divine appointment will carry it, and weigh down all difficulties; for the wife considers her station, that she is set in it, ὑποταγὴν it is the rank the Lord's hand hath placed her in, and therefore she will not break it; out of respect and love to him, she can digest much frowardness of a husband, and make that her patient subjection a sacrifice to God. "Lord "I offer this to thee, and for thy sake I humbly "bear it,"

[c] Gen. iii. 16.

The worth and love of a husband may cause that respect, where this rule moves not: but the christian wife that hath love to God, though her husband be not so comely, nor so wise, nor any way so amiable, as many others; yet because he is her *own husband*, and because of the Lord's command in the general, and his providence in the particular disposal of his own, therefore she loves and obeys.

That if any obey not the word.] This supposes a particular case, and applies the rule to it; takes it for granted that a believing wife will chearfully observe and respect a believing husband; but if he is an unbeliever, yet that unties not this engagement; yea there is something in this case which presses it and binds it the more, a singular good which probably may follow upon obeying such; by *that good conversation*, they may be gained who believe not the word, not that they could be fully converted without the word, but having a prejudice against the word, that may be removed by the carriage of a believing wife, and they may be somewhat mollified and prepared, and induced to hearken to religion, and take it into consideration.

This gives not christians warrant to draw on this task, and make themselves this work, by chusing to be joined to an unbeliever, either a profane or mere natural husband or wife; but teacheth them being so matched, what should be their great desire, and their suitable carriage in order to the attainment of it. And in the primitive christian times, this fell out often, that by the gospel preached, the husband might be converted from gross infidelity, *Judaism*, or *paganism*, and not the wife; or the wife, which is the supposition here, and not the husband; and there came in the use of this consideration.

And in this is the freedom of divine grace, to pick and chuse where he will, *one of a family, or two of a tribe*, as the prophet hath it[f], and according to our Saviour's word, *two in one bed*, the *one taken and the other left*[g]. Some selected

[f] Jer. iii. 14. [g] Luke xvii. 34.

ones in a congregation, and in a house, a child possibly, or servant, or wife, and leave the rest. The apostle seems to imply particularly, that there were many instances of this, wives, converts, and husbands unbelieving. We can determine nothing of their conjecture, who think there shall be more of that sex, here called the *weaker vessels*, than of the other, who shall be vessels of honour, which God seasons with grace here, and hereafter will fill with glory; but this is clear, that many of them are converted, while many men, and divers of them very wise and learned men, having the same and far greater means and opportunities, do perish in unbelief. This, I say, evidences the liberty, and the power of the Spirit of God, that *wind, that bloweth where it listeth*[h], and withal it suits with that word of the Apostle, that the Lord this way abases these things that men account so much of, *and hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty*, &c[i]. Nor doth the pliableness, and tenderness of their affections (though grace once wrought may make good use of that) make their conversion easier, but the harder rather; for through nature's corruption, they would by that yield more to evil than to good; but the efficacy of grace appears much in establishing their hearts in the love of God, and making them once possessed with that, to be inflexible, and invincible by the temptations of the world, and the strength, and slights of Satan.

That which is here said of *their conversation*, holds of the husband in the like case, and of friends and kindred, and generally of all christians, in reference to them with whom they converse; that their spotless holy carriage as christians, and in their particular stations, as christian husbands, or wives, or friends, is a very likely and hopeful means of converting others who believe not. Men who are prejudiced observe actions a great deal more than words. In those first times especially, the blame-

[h] Joh. xiii. 8. [i] 1 Cor. i. 26.

less carriage of christians did much to the increasing of their number.

Strive ye wives, and others, to adorn and commend the religion you profess to others, especially those nearest you, who are averse. Give no just cause of scandal and prejudice against religion. Beware not only of gross failings and ways of sin, but of such imprudencies as may expose you and your profession: study both a holy and wise carriage, and pray much for it[k], *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.*

But if wives, and other private christians, be thus obliged, how much more the ministers of the word? Oh! that we could remember our deep engagement to holiness of life: he said right, *either teach none, or let your life teach too*, Naz. *Cohelleth, anima concionatrix* [the preaching soul] must the preacher be[l], the word of life springing from inward affection, and then *vita concionatrix* [the preaching life] will be added. The *Sunday's* sermon lasts but an hour or two, but holiness of life is a continued sermon all the week long.

They also without the word may be won.] The conversion of a soul is an inestimable gain; it is a high trading and design to go about it. Oh! the precious soul, but undervalued by most! will we believe him that knew well the price of it, for he paid it, that the *whole* visible *world* is not worth *one soul*, the *gaining it all* cannot countervail that *loss*[m]? This wives, and husbands, and parents, and friends, if themselves converted, would consider seriously, and apply themselves to pray much that their unconverted relations, in nature dead, may be enlivened, and they may receive them from death; and esteem of nothing, rest in no natural content, nor gain without that; at least using incessant diligence in seeking it, and their utmost skill and pains in it. But above all, this is the peculiar

[k] Ja. i. 5. [l] Eccles. i. 1. [m] Matth. xvi. 26.

task of ministers, as the apostle often repeats it of himself[n], all gains on earth are base in comparison with this; a soul converted is *gained* to itself, *gained* to the pastor, or friend, or wife, or husband that sought it, and *gained* to Jesus Christ[o]; added to his treasury, who thought not his own precious blood too dear to lay out for this gain.

Ver. 2. *While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.*

As all graces are connected in their own nature, so it is altogether necessary that they be found so for the end here propounded, the conversion of those that are strangers to religion, and possest with false notions of it, and prejudices against it. It is not the regularity of some particular actions, nor the observance of some duties that will serve; but it is an even uniform frame of life that the apostle here teaches christian wives, particularly in reference to this end, the gaining, or conversion of unbelieving husbands: and this we have both in that word, *their conversation*, which signifies the whole course and tract of their lives: and in the particular specifying of the several duties proper to that relation and state of life, 1. Subjection. 2. Chastity. 3. Fear. 4. Modesty in outward ornaments. 5. The inward ornaments of meekness and quietness of spirit.

The combination of these things makes up such a wife, and the exercise of them throughout her life, makes up such a conversation, as adorns and commends the religion they profess, and is a fit, and may be a successful means of converting the husband who as yet professes it not.

Chaste conversation.] It is the proper character of a christian to study purity in all things, as the word ἁγνὸν in its extent signifies. Let the world turn that to a reproach, call them as you will, this is

[n] 1 Cor. ix.

[o] Me malè amando, me perdidi, & te solum quærendo & purè amando, me & te pariter inveni. THO. A KEMP.

sure, that none have less fancy and presumption of *purity*, than they that have most desire of it. But the particular pureness here intended, is, as it is rendered, that of *chastity*, as the word is often taken; it being a grace that peculiarly deserves that name, as the sins contrary to it are usually and deservedly called *uncleanness*. It is the pure whiteness of the soul to be chaste, to abhor and disdain the swinish puddle of lust, than which there is nothing that doth more debase the excellent soul; nothing that more evidently draws it down below itself, and makes it truly brutish. The three kinds of chastity in virginity, marriage and widowhood, are all of them acceptable to God, and suitable to the profession of a christian; therefore in general only, whatsoever be our condition of life, let us in that way conform to it, follow the apostle's rule, *possessing* those our earthen *vessels*, our bodies, in *holiness* and *honour;* by which there is expressed this same chastity. And this we shall do, if we rightly remember our calling, as christians, in what sort of life soever; as there he tells us, *That God hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness*[p].

With fear.] Either a reverent respect to their husbands, or the fear of God; whence flows best both that and all other observance, whether of conjugal or any other christian duties. Be not presumptuous (as some) because you are chaste, but contemper your conversation that way with a religious fear of God, that you dare not take liberty to offend him in any other thing; and according to his institution, let it be joined with a reverent fear of your husbands, shunning to offend them. But possibly this fear doth particularly relate to this other duty with which it is joined, *chaste conversation with fear;* fearing the least stain of chastity, or the very least appearance of any thing not suiting with it. It is a delicate timorous grace, afraid of the least air, or shadow of any thing that hath but a resemblance of wronging it, in carriage,

[p] 1 Thess. iv. 7.

or speech, or apparel, as follows in the 3d and 4th verses.

Ver. 3. *Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel.*

4. *But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.*

THAT nothing may be wanting to the qualifying of a christian wife, she is taught how to dress herself: supposing a general desire, but especially in that sex, of ornament and comeliness; the sex, that began first our engagement to the necessity of cloathing, having still a peculiar propension to be curious in that, and to improve the necessity to an advantage.

The direction here given corrects the misplacing of this diligence, and addresses it right, *i. e. Let it not be of the outward man, in plaiting*, &c.

Our perverse crooked hearts turn all we use into disorder. Those two necessities of our life, *food* and *raiment*, how few know the right measure and bounds of them? unless poverty be our carver, and cut us short, who, almost is there, that is not bent to something excessive! Far more are beholding to the lowliness of their estate, than to the lowliness of their mind for sobriety in these things; and yet some will not be so bounded neither, but will profusely lavish out upon trifles, to the sensible prejudice of their estate.

It is not my purpose, nor do I think it very needful to debate many particulars of apparel and ornament of the body, their lawfulness or unlawfulness: only,

1*st*, It is out of doubt, that though cloathing was first drawn on by necessity, yet all regard of comeliness and ornament in apparel is not unlawful, nor doth the apostle's expression here, rightly considered, fasten that upon the adorning he here speaks of.

He doth no more universally condemn the use of gold for ornament, than he doth any other comely raiment, which here he means by that general word of *putting on of apparel*, for his [*not*] is comparative; *not this adorning, but the ornament of a meek spirit*, that rather, and as much more comely and precious; as that known expression[a], *I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.*

2dly, According to the different place and quality of persons, there may be difference in this: thus the robes of judges and princes are not only for personal ornament, but because there is in them, especially to vulgar eyes that seldom look deeper than the outside of things; there is, I say, in that apparel a representation of authority or majesty, that befits their place: and besides this, other persons that are not in public place, men or women, that are here particularly directed, yet may have in this some mark of their rank; and in persons otherwise little distant, some allowance may be made for the habits and breeding of some beyond others, or the quality of their society, and those with whom they converse.

3dly, It is not impossible that there may be in some an affected pride in the meanness of apparel; and in others, under either neat or rich attire a very humble unaffected mind; using it upon some of the aforementioned engagements, or such like, and yet the heart not at all upon it[b].

4thly, It is as sure as any of these, that real excess and vanity in apparel will creep in, and will always willingly convey itself under the cloak of some of these honest and lawful considerations. This is a prime piece of our heart's deceit, not only to hold out fair pretences to others, but to put the trick upon ourselves, to make ourselves believe we are right and single minded in those things where-

[a] Hosea, vi. 6.

[b] Magnus qui fictilibus utitur tanquam argento, nec ille minor qui argento tanquam fictilibus. SEN.

in we are directly serving our lusts and feeding our own vanity.

5thly, To a sincere and humble christian, very little either dispute or discourse concerning this will be needful; a tender conscience, and a heart purged from vanity, and weaned from the world, will be sure to regulate this and all other things of this nature, after the safest manner, and will be wary.

1. Of lightness and fantastic garb in apparel, which is the very bush or sign hanging out, that tells a vain mind lodges within. 2. Of excessive costliness, which both argues, and feeds the pride of the heart, and defrauds, if not others of their dues, yet the poor of thy charity, which in God's sight, is a due debt too; and far more comfort shalt thou have on thy death bed, to remember that such a time, instead of putting lace on my own cloaths, I helped a naked back to cloathing, I abated somewhat of my former superfluities, to supply the poor's necessities; far sweeter will this be, than to remember, that I could needlessly cast out many pounds to serve my pride, rather than give a penny to relieve the poor.

As conscientious christians will not exceed in the thing itself, so in as far as they use lawful ornament and comeliness, they will do it without bestowing either much diligence or delight in the business.

To have the mind taken and pleased with such things, is so foolish and childish a thing, that if most might not find it in themselves, they would wonder at many others, of years and common wit[b]. And yet truly it is a disease that few escape. It is strange upon how poor things men and women will be vain, and think themselves somebody; not only upon some comeliness in their face or feature, which though poor yet is a part of themselves, but of things merely without them; that they are well lodged, or well mounted, or well apparelled, either

[b] Non bis pueri sed semper.

richly, or well in fashion. Light empty minds are as bladders blown up with any thing, and they that perceive not this in themselves, are most drowned; but such as have found it out, and abhor their own follies, are still hunting and following these in themselves to beat them out of their hearts, and to shame them from such fopperies. The soul fallen from God, hath lost its true worth and beauty; and therefore it basely descends to these mean things, to serve and dress the body, and take share with it of its unworthy borrowed ornaments; while it hath lost and forgotten God, and seeks not after him, knows not that he alone is the beauty, and ornament of the soul[d], and his Spirit, and the grace of it, its rich attire, here particularly specified in one excellent grace; and it holds true in the rest.

The Apostle doth indeed, expressly on purpose, check and forbid vanity and excess in apparel, and excessive delight in lawful decorum, but his prime end is to recommend this other ornament of the soul, *The hidden man of the heart.*

It is the thing the best philosophy aimed at, as some of their chiefest men do express it, to reduce men, as much as may be, from their body to their soul; but this is the thing that true religion alone doth effectually and thoroughly; from the pampering and feeding of a morsel for the worms, to the nourishing of that immortal being infused into it; which therefore it directs to the proper nourishment of souls, *the bread that came down from heaven*[e].

So here the Apostle pulls off from christian women their vain outside ornaments: but is not this a wrong to spoil all their dressing and fineness? no, he doth this, only to send them to a better wardrobe; and there is much profit in the change.

All the gold, and other riches of the temple, figured the excellent graces of christians, of Christ indeed first, as having all fulness in himself, and

[d] Jer. ii. 32. [e] Joh. vi. 27.

and furnishing them; but secondarily of christians, as the living temples of God. So the church is *all glorious*, but it is *within*[f]. And the embroidery, the variety of graces, the lively colours of other graces shine best on the dark ground of humility. Christ delights to give much ornament to his church, commends what she hath, and adds more[g], *Thy neck is comely with chains, we will make thee borders of gold.*

The particular grace he recommends is particularly suitable to his subject in hand, the conjugal duty of wives; nothing so much adorning their whole carriage as this *meekness* and *quietness of spirit.* But it is, withal, the comeliness of every christian in every estate; it is not a woman's garment or ornament, improper for men. There is somewhat (as I may say) of a particular cut or fashion of it for wives towards their husbands, and in their domestic affairs; but men, all men ought to wear of the same stuff, yea, so if I may speak, of the same piece; for it is in all one and the same spirit, and fits the stoutest and greatest commanders. *Moses* was a great general, and yet no less great in this virtue, *the meekest man on earth.*

Nothing is more uncomely in a wife than an uncomposed turbulent spirit, that is put out of frame with every trifle, and inventive of false causes of disquietness and fretting to itself. And so in a husband, and in all, an unquiet passionate mind lays itself naked, and discovers its own deformity to all. The greatest part of things that vex us, do so, not from their own nature or weight, but, the unsettledness of our minds[h]. How comely is it to see a composed firm mind and carriage, that is not lightly moved!

I urge not a stoical stupidity; but that in things that deserve sharp reproof, the mind keep in its own station and seat still, not shaken out of itself, as the most are; that the tongue utter not unseemly rash

[f] Psal. xlv. 13. [g] Cant. i. 10, 11.
[h] Multa nos offendunt quæ non lædunt.

words, nor the hand act any thing that discovers the mind hath lost its command for the time. But, truly, the most know so ill how to use just anger, upon just cause, that it is easier, and the safer extreme, not to be angry, but still calm and serene, as the upper region; not the place of continual tempest and storms, as the most are: let it pass for a kind of sheepishness to be meek, it is a likeness to him that *was as a sheep before the shearers, not opening his mouth*[j], it is a portion of his spirit.

The Apostle commends his exchange of ornaments from two things: 1. This is incorruptible, and therefore fits an incorruptible soul. Your varieties of jewels and rich apparel are perishing things; you shall one day see an heap made of all, and that all on a flame; and in reference to you, they perish sooner; when death strips you of your nearest garment, your flesh, all the other, which were but loose upper garments above it, must off too. It gets indeed a covering for the grave, but the soul is left stark naked, if no other cloathing be provided for it, for the body was but borrowed; then it is made bare of all. But spiritual ornaments, and this of humility and meekness, here, amongst the rest, remain and are incorruptible; they neither wear out, nor out of fashion, but are still the better for the wearing, and shall last eternity, and shine there in full lustre.

And, 2. because the opinion of others is much regarded in matter of apparel, and it is mostly in respect to this that we use ornament in it, he tells us of the account of this. Men think it poor and mean, nothing more exposed to contempt than the *spirit of meekness;* it is mere folly with men, but that is no matter, this overweighs all their disesteem, *it is with God of great price*, and things are indeed as he values them, and no otherways. Though it be not the country fashion, yet it is the fashion at court, yea, it is the king's own fashion[k], *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly*, &c. Some that are

[j] Isa. liii. 7. [k] Matth. xi. 29.

court bred will send for the masters of fashions though they live not in the court; and though the peasants think them strange dresses, yet they regard not that, but use them as finest and best: care not what the world say; you are not to stay long with them. Desire to have both fashions and stuffs from court, from Heaven, this *spirit of meekness*, and it shall be sent you. It is never right in any thing with us till we attain to this, to tread on the opinion of men, and eye nothing but God's approbation.

Ver. 5. *For after this manner in the old time, the holy women also who trusted in God adorned themselves.*

6. *Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord; whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.*

THE Apostle enforces his doctrine by example, the most compendious way of teaching; hence the right way to use the Scriptures, is to regulate our manners by them; as by their precepts, so by examples. And for this end it is that a great part of it is historical. There is not in the saints a transmigration of souls, but there is, so to speak, an oneness of soul, they being in all ages partakers of the self same spirit. Hence the daughters of *Sarah* are called pious and obedient wives. Such women are here designed, 1. As holy. 2. Believing. 3. Firm and resolute, *not afraid with any amazement.* Though by nature they are fearful, yet rendered of undaunted spirits, by a holy, clean, and pure conscience. Believing wives who fear God, are not terrified, their minds are established in a due obedience to God, and also towards their husbands.

Ver. 7. *Likewise ye husbands, dwell with them, according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel; and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.*

YOUR wives are subject to you, but you likewise are subject to this word, by which all ought, in all stations, to be directed, and by which however all shall one day be judged; and *alike* subject as they, [ὁμοίως] parents as children, masters as servants, and kings as their subjects; all hold of a superior; and it is high treason against the majesty of God, for any, in any place of command, to dream of any unbounded absolute authority, in opposition to him.

A spirit of prudence or *knowledge*, particularly suitable and relating to this subject is required, as the light and rule by which his whole oeconomy and carriage is to be guided. It is required that he endeavour after that civil prudence, for the ordering of his affairs, that tends to the good of his family, but chiefly a pious religious prudence, for regulating his mind and carriage as a christian husband; that he study the rule of scripture in this particular, which many do not; neither advising with it, what they should do, nor laying it by reflexion upon their past actions, examining by it what they have done. Now this is the great fault in all practical things; most know something of them, but inadvertency and inconsideration, not ordering our ways by that light, is the thing that spoils all.

Knowledge is required in the wife, but more eminently in *the husband*, as the head, the proper seat of knowledge. It is possible, that the wife may sometimes have the advantage of knowledge, either natural wit and judgment, or a great measure of understanding of spiritual things; but this still holds, that the husband is bound to improve the measure both of natural and of spiritual gifts that he hath, or can attain to, and to apply them usefully to the

ordering of his conjugal carriage, and that he understand himself obliged somewhat the more, in the very notion of a husband, both to seek after and to use, that prudence that is peculiarly required for his due deportment; and a christian wife, who is more largely endued, yet will shew all due respect to the measure of wisdom, though it be less, that is bestowed upon her husband.

Dwell with them.] This indeed implies and supposes their abiding with them, so far as their calling and lawful affairs permit: But I conceive, that which it expressly means, is all the conversation and duties of that estate, that they so behave themselves in dwelling with them, as becomes *men of knowledge*, wise and prudent husbands, which returns them usually the gain of that full reverence and respect that is due to them, of which they rob and divest themselves, who are either of a foolish or trifling carriage, or of too austere and rigid a conversation.

Giving honour unto the wife.] This, I conceive, is not as some take it, convenient maintenance, though that is a requisite duty too, and may be taken in under this word; but it seems to be, chiefly, a due conjugal esteem of them, and respect to them, the husband not vilifying and despising them, which will be apt to grieve and exasperate them; not disclosing the weaknesses of the wife to others, nor observing them too narrowly himself; but hiding them both from others, and his own eyes by love; not seeing them further than love itself requires, that is, to the wise rectifying of them by mild advices and admonitions that flow from love. And to this the reasons indeed suit well: it seems at first a little incongruous, *Honour* because *weaker;* but the pertinency of it appears, considering this kind of honour; not of reverence as superior, for that is their part; but such an esteem and respect, without which indeed, love cannot consist; for we cannot love that which we do not in some good measure esteem well of: And care should be taken that they be not contemned and slighted, even because they are weaker; for

of all injuries, contempt is one of the most smarting and sensible, especially to weak persons, who feel most exactly the least touches of this[a]; whereas greater spirits are a little harder against opinion, and more indifferent for it. Some wives may indeed be of a stronger mind and judgment than the husbands, yet these rules respect the general condition of the sexes, and speak of the females, as ordinarily weaker.

Again, love, which is ever to be supposed one article, and the main one; for nothing indeed can be right where that supposition proves false; love, I say, supposed, this reason is very enforcing, that the weaker the vessels be, the more tenderly they should be used, and the more a prudent passing by of frailties is needful; there love will study it, and bestow it the more. Yea, this tie you know makes two one; and that which is a part of ourselves, the more it needs in that, the *more comeliness we put upon it*, as the Apostle St. *Paul* tells us[b]. And this further may be considered, that there is a mutual need of this *honouring*, that consists in not despising, and in covering of frailties, as is even implied in this, that the woman is not called simply weak, but the *weaker;* and the husband, that is generally, by nature's advantage, or should be, the stronger, yet is weak too; for both are vessels of earth, and therefore frail; both polluted with sin, and therefore subject to a multitude of sinful follies and frailties: But as that particular frailty of nature pleads for women that *honour;* so the other reason added, is not from particular disadvantage, but from their common privilege, and advantage of grace, as christians, that the christian husband and wife are equally *co-heirs* of the same *grace of life.*

As being heirs together of the grace of life.] This is that which most strongly binds on all these duties, on the hearts of husbands and wives; and most strongly indeed binds their hearts together, and makes them one. If each be reconciled unto God

[a] Omne infirmum naturâ querelum. [b] 1 Cor. xii. 23.

in Christ, and so heirs of life, and one with God, then are they truly one in God, each with other; and that is the surest and sweetest union that can be. Natural love hath risen very high in some husbands and wives; but the highest of it falls very far short of that which holds in God. Hearts concentring in him are most excellently one. That love which is cemented by youth and beauty, when these moulder and decay, as soon they do, it fades too. That is somewhat purer, and so more lasting, that holds in a natural or moral harmony of minds, yet these likewise may alter and change by some great accident: But the most refined, most spiritual, and most indissoluble, is that which is knit with the highest and purest spirit. And the ignorance or disregard of this is the great cause of so much bitterness, or so little true sweetness in the life of most married persons, because God is left out, because they meet not as one in him.

Heirs together.] Loth will they be to despise one another, that are both bought with the precious blood of one Redeemer, and loth to grieve one another, being in him brought into peace with God, they will entertain true peace betwixt themselves, and not suffer any thing to disturb it. They have hopes to meet one day, where is nothing but perfect concord and peace; they will therefore live as heirs of that life here, and make their present estate as like to Heaven as they can, and so a pledge and evidence of their title to that inheritance of peace that is there laid up for them. And they will not fail to put one another often in mind of those hopes, and that inheritance, and mutually to advance and further each other towards it: Where this is not minded, it is to little purpose to speak of other rules; where neither party aspires to this heirship, live they otherwise as they will, there is one common inheritance abiding them, one inheritance of everlasting flames; and, as they do increase the sin and guiltiness of one another by their irreligious conversation, so that which some of them do wickedly here, upon no great

cause, they shall have full cause for doing there; cause to curse the time of their coming together; and that shall be a piece of their exercise for ever: But happy those persons, in any society of marriage or friendship, that converse so together, as those that shall live eternally together in glory. This indeed is the sum of all duties.

Life.] A sweet word, but sweetest of all in this sense, that life above is indeed only worthy the name; and this we have here, in comparison, let it not be called life, but continual dying; an incessant journey towards the grave. If you reckon years, it is but a short moment to him that attains the fullest old age: But reckon miseries and sorrows, it is long to him that dies young. Oh! that this only blessed life were more known, and then it would be more desired.

Grace.] This is the tenor of this heirship, free grace; this life a free gift[c]. No life so spotless, either in marriage or virginity, as to lay claim to this life upon other terms. If we consider but a little, what it is, and what we are, this will be quickly out of question with us; and we shall be most gladly content to hold it thus, by deed or gift, and shall admire and extol that grace that bestows it.

That your prayers be not hindered.] He supposes in christians the necessary and frequent use of this; takes it for granted, that the heirs of life cannot live without prayer. This is the proper breathing and language of these heirs, none of them is dumb; they can all speak. These heirs, if they be alone, they pray alone; if heirs together, and living together, they pray together. Can the husband and wife have that love, wisdom and meekness, that may make their life happy, and that blessing that may make their affairs successful, while they neglect God the only giver of these and all good things? You think these needless motives, but you cannot think how it would sweeten your converse if it were used. It is

[c] Rom. vi. ult.

prayer that sanctifies, seasons and blesses all; and it is not enough that they pray when with the family; but even husband and wife together by themselves, and with their children; that they, especially the mother, as being most with them in their childhood, when they begin to be capable, may draw them apart, and offer them to God, often praying with them, and instructing them in their youth; for they are pliable while young, as glass when hot, but after, will sooner break than bend.

But above all, prayer is necessary, as they are heirs of Heaven, they should be often sending up their desires thither. You that are not much in prayer, appear as if you looked for no more than what you have here. If you had an inheritance and *treasure* above, would not *your hearts delight to be there*[d]? Thus the heart of a christian is in the constant frame of it; but after a special manner prayer raises the soul above the world, and sets it in Heaven: It is its near access unto God, and dealing with him, especially about those affairs that concern that inheritance. Now in this lies a great part of the comfort a christian can have here; and the Apostle knew this, that he would gain any thing at their hands, that he pressed by this argument, that otherwise they would be *hindered in their prayers.* He knew that they who are acquainted with prayer find such unspeakable sweetness in it, that they will rather do any thing than be prejudiced in that.

Now the breach of conjugal love, the jars and contentions of husband and wife, do out of doubt, so leaven and imbitter their spirits, that they are exceeding unfit for prayer, which is the sweet harmony of the soul in God's ears; and when the soul is so far out of tune as those distempers make it, he cannot but perceive it, whose ear is the most exact of all; for he made and tuned the ear, and is the fountain of harmony. It cuts the sinews and strength of prayer, makes breaches and gaps as wounds, at which the spirits fly out, as the cutting

[d] Luke xii. 34.

of a vein, by which, as they speak, it bleeds to death. When the soul is calm and composed, it may behold the face of God shining on it; and they that pray together, should not only have hearts in tune within themselves in their own frame, but tuned together, especially husband and wife, that are one; they should have hearts consorted and sweetly tuned to each other for prayer. So the word is, ἐὰν συμφωνήσωσιν[e].

And it is true, in the general, that all unwary walking in christians, wrongs their communion with Heaven, and casts a damp upon their prayers, so as to clog the wings of it. These two mutually help one another, *prayer* and *holy conversation;* the more exactly we walk, the more fit are we for prayer; and the more we pray, the more are we enabled to walk exactly; and it is a happy life to find the correspondence of these two, *calling on the Lord*, and *departing from iniquity*[f]. Therefore, that you may pray much, live holily, and that you may live holily, be much in prayer; surely such are the heirs of glory, and this is their way to it.

Ver. 8. *Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassio one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.*

HERE the particular rules the Apostle gives to several relations, fall in again to the main current of his general exhortation, that concerns us all as christians. The return of his discourse to this universality is expressed in that, *finally*, and the universality of these duties, [*all.*] It is neither possible nor convenient to descend to every particular; but there is supposed in a christian an ingenuous and prudent spirit, to adapt those general rules to their particular actions and conversation; squaring by them before hand, and examining by them after, and yet herein the most fail: Men hear these as general discourses, and let them pass so; they apply them not, or if they do, it is readily to some

[e] Matt. xviii. 19. [f] 1 Tim. ii. 19,

other person: But they are addressed to all, that each one may regulate himself by them; and so these divine truths are like a well drawn picture, which looks particularly upon every one amongst the great multitude that look upon it. And this one verse hath a cluster of five christian graces or virtues. That which is in the middle, as the stalk or root of the rest, *love*, and the other growing out of it, two on each side, *unanimity* and *sympathy* on the one, and *pity* and *courtesy* on the other; but we shall take them as they lie.

Of one mind.] This doth not only mean union in judgment, but it extends likewise to affection and action; especially in so far as they relate to, and depend upon the other. And so, I conceive, it comprehends in its full latitude an harmony and agreement of minds and affections, and carriage in christians, as making up one body, and a serious study of preserving and increasing that agreement in all things, but especially in spiritual things, in which their communion doth primely consist. And because in this, the consent of their judgments in matters of religion is a prime point; therefore we will consider that a little more particularly.

And *first*, What it is not.

1. It is not a careless indifferency concerning those things; not to be troubled about them at all, nor to make any judgment concerning them. This is not a loving agreement, arising from oneness of spirit, but a dead stupidity, arguing a total spiritlessness; as the agreement of a number of dead bodies together, which indeed do not strive and contest, that is, they move not at all, and that because they live not: So that concord in things of religion, which is a not considering them, nor acting of the mind about them, is either the fruit and sign of gross ignorance, or irreligion; they that are wholly ignorant of spiritual things, are content you determine, and impose upon them what you will, as in the dark there is no difference nor choice of colours, they are all one: But, 2, which is worse, in some this peace-

ableness about religion, is from an universal unbelief and disaffection; and that sometimes comes of the much search and knowledge of debates and controversies in religion, men having so many disputes about religion in their heads, and no life of religion in their hearts, fall into a conceit that all is but juggling, and the easiest way, is, to believe nothing; and these agree with any, or rather with none. Sometimes it is from a profane supercilious disdain of all these things, and many there be of these of *Gallio*'s temper, that *care for none of these things*, and that account all questions in religion, as he did; but matter of words and names. And by this all religions may agree together: But it were not a natural union by the active heat of the spirit, but a confusion rather, by the want of it; not a knitting together, but a freezing together, as cold congregates all bodies, how heterogeneous soever, sticks, stones and water: But heat makes first a separation of different things, and then unites those that are of the same nature.

And to one or other of these two is reducible much of the common quietness of people's minds about religion; all that implicit *Romish* agreement that they boast of, what is it, but a brutish ignorance of spiritual things, authorised and recommended for that very purpose? And amongst the learned of them, there are as many idle differences and disputes as amongst any. It is an easy way indeed to agree, if all will put out their eyes and follow the blind guiding of their judge of controversies; this is that πάντοφον φάρμακον, their great device for peace, to let the people determine all. If all will resolve to be cozened by him, he will agree them all; as if the consciences of men should only find peace by being led by the nose at one man's pleasure; a way the Apostle *Paul* clearly renounces[s], *Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy; for by faith ye stand.*

And though we have escaped this, yet much of our

[s] 2 Cor. i. 24.

common union of minds, I fear, is from no other than the aforementioned causes, want of knowledge, and want of affection to religion. You that boast you live conformably to the appointments of the church, and none hears of your noise, we may thank the ignorance of your minds for that kind of quietness. But this unanimity, here required, is another thing; and before I unfold it I shall premise this, That although it be very difficult, and it may be impossible, to determine what things are alone fundamental in religion, under the notion of difference, intended by that word; yet it is undoubted, that there be some truths more absolutely necessary, and therefore accordingly more clearly revealed, than some others; there are μέγαλα τῦ νόμυ, *great things of the law*[h], and so of the Gospel. And though no part of divine truth once fully cleared, ought to be slighted; yet there are things that may be true, and yet are but of less importance, and of less evidence than others. And that this difference is wisely to be considered by christians, for the interest of this agreement of minds here recommended, and concerning it we may safely conclude,

1. That christians ought to have a clear and unanimous belief of the mysteries and principles of faith, to agree in those without controversy. 2. They ought to be diligent in the re-search of truth in all things that concern faith and religion; and withal to use all due means for the fullest consent and agreement in them all that possibly can be attained. 3. Perfect and universal consent in all, after all industry bestowed on it, for any thing we know, is not here attainable, neither betwixt all churches, nor all persons in one and the same church: And therefore, though church-meetings and synods, as the fittest and most effectual way to this unity, should endeavour to bring the church to the fullest agreement that may be, yet they should beware, lest the straining it too high in all things, rather break it,

[h] Matt. xxxiii. 23.

and an over diligence in appointing uniformities, remove them further from it: Leaving a latitude and indifferency in things capable of it, is often a stronger preserver of peace and unity. But this by the way; we will rather give some few rules that may be of use to every particular christian, toward this common christian good of unity of mind.

1st, Beware of two extremes, that often cause divisions, *captivity to custom*, on the one hand, and *affectation of novelty* on the other.

2dly, Labour for a stayed mind, that will *not be tossed with every wind of doctrine*[l], or appearance of reason, as some, that like weather-cocks are easily blown to any side, with mistakes of the scriptures, either arising in their own minds, or suggested by others.

3dly, In unclear and doubtful things, be not pertinacious, as the weakest minds are readiest to be, upon seeming reason, which tried, will possibly fall to nothing; yet they are most assured, and cannot suffer a different thought in any from their own. There is naturally this *popeness* in every man's mind, and most, I say, in the shallowest; a kind of fancied *infallibility* in themselves, which makes them *contentious* (contrary to the Apostle's rule[k], *Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory,*) and as earnest upon differing in the smallest punctilio, as in a high article of faith. Stronger spirits are usually more patient of contradiction, and less violent, especially in doubtful things; and they that see farthest, are least peremptory in their determinations. The Apostle to *Timothy*[m], hath a word, *the spirit of a sound mind;* it is a good sound constitution of mind, not to feel every blast, either of seeming reason to be taken with it, or of cross opinion to be offended at it.

4thly, Join that which is there, *the spirit of love*, in this particular. Not at all abating affection for every light difference (and this the most are a little to blame in;) whereas the abundance of that should

[k] Ephes. iv. 14. [l] Phil. iii. 3. [m] 2 Epis. i. 7.

rather fill up the gap of these petty disagreements, that they do not appear, nor be at all sensibly to be found. No more disaffection ought to follow this, than the difference of our faces and complexions, or feature of body, which cannot be found in any two alike in all things.

And these things would be of easier persuasion, if we considered, 1. How supple and flexible a thing human reason is, and therefore not lightly to be trusted to, and that especially in divine things; for *here we know but in part*[n]. 2. The small importance of some things that have bred much noise and dissention in the world, as the Apostle speaks of the tongue, *How little a spark, how great a fire will it kindle*[o], and a great many of these debates, that cost men so much pains and time, are as far from clear decision, as when they began, and possibly of so little moment, that if they were ended, their profit would not quit the cost. 3. Consider the strength of christian charity, that if it dwelt much in our hearts, would preserve this union of mind, amidst very many different thoughts, such as they may be, and would teach us that excellent lesson, the Apostle gives to this purpose[p], *Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.* Let us follow our Lord unanimously, in what he hath clearly manifested to us, and given us with one consent to embrace; as the spheres, notwithstanding each one hath its particular motion, yet all are wheeled about together with the first.

And that leads us to consider the further extent of this word, to agree in heart and in conversation, walking by the rule of those undoubted truths we have received: And in this I shall recommend these two things to you;

1. In the defence of the truth, as the Lord shall

[n] 1 Cor. xiii. 9. [o] James iii. 5. [p] Phil. iii. 15, 16.

call us, let us be of one mind, and all as one man. Satan acts by that maxim, and all his followers have it, *divide and conquer;* and therefore let us hold that counter-maxim, *Union invincible.*

2. In the practice of that truth agree as one. Let your conversation be uniform, by being squared to that one rule, and in all spiritual exercises join as one, be *of one heart and mind.* Would not our public worship, think you, prove much more both comfortable and profitable, if our hearts met in it as one, so that we could say of our hearing the word, as he[q], *We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded of God?* And if our prayers ascended up as one pillar of incense to the throne of grace; if they besieged it, as an army, all surrounding it together, to obtain favour for ourselves and the church[r]? This is much with God, the *consent of hearts* petitioning[s]. So says our Saviour[t], *Where two or three are gathered;* not their bodies within the same walls only, for so they are but so many carcases tumbled together; and the promise of his being amongst us, is not made to that, *for he is the God of the living and not of the dead*[u]. It is the spirit of darkness that abides amongst the tombs and graves; but *gathered in my name,* one, in that one holy name, written upon their hearts, and uniting them, and so thence expressed in their joint services and invocations. So he says there of them, *who agree upon any thing they shall ask,* συμφωνήσωσιν. If all their hearts present and hold it up together, if they make one cry or song of it, that harmony of their hearts shall be sweet in the Lord's ears, and shall draw a gracious answer out of his hand. If ye agree, your joint petitions shall be as it were an arrest or decree that shall stand in Heaven, *it shall be done for them of my Father which is in Heaven.* But alas! where is our agreement? The greatest part of hearts say no-

[q] Acts. x. 33. [r] Stipato agmine Deum obsidentes.—TERTULL.
[s] Fama est junctas fortiùs ire preces. [t] Matt. xviii. 20.
[u] Matt. xxii. 32.

thing, and others with such wavering and such a jarring harsh noise, being out of tune, earthly, too low set, that they spoil all, and disappoint the answers. Were the censer fill'd with those united prayers Heaven-wards, it would be filled with fire earth-wards against the enemies of the church.

And in your private society, seek unanimously your own, and each another's spiritual good; not only agreeing in your affairs and civil converse, but having *one heart and mind*, as christians. To eat and drink together, if you do no more, is such society as beasts may have; to do these in the excess, to guzzle and drink intemperately together, is a society worse than that of beasts, and below them: to discourse together of civil business, is to converse as men. But the peculiar converse of christians in that notion, as born again to immortality, an unfading inheritance above, is to further one another towards that, to put one another in mind of Heaven, and things that are heavenly. And it is strange that men that profess to be christians, when they meet, either fill one another's ears with lies and profane speeches, or with vanities and trifles, or at the best with the affairs of the earth, and not a word of those things that should most possess the heart, and where the mind should be most set, but are ready to reproach and taunt any such thing in others: What! are you ashamed of Christ and religion? Why do you profess it then? Is there such a thing, think ye, as *communion of saints?* If not, why do you say you believe it? It is a truth, think of it as you will, the public ministry will profit little any where, where a people or some part of them are not thus one, and do not live together as of one mind, and use diligently all due means of edifying one another in their holy faith. How much of the primitive christian's praise and profit is involved in the word, *they were together* [ὁμοθυμαδὸν] *with one accord, with one mind*, and so they grew; *the Lord added to the church*[x].

[x] Acts ii. 1. 44. 47.

Consider, 1. How the wicked are one in their ungodly designs and practices. *The scales of Leviathan,* as *Luther* expresses it, "Are *linkt toge-*
"*ther;* shall not the Lord's followers be one in
"him? They unite to undermine the peace of the
"church; shall not the godly join their prayers to
"countermine them?"

2. There is in the hearts of all the saints one spirit. How then can they be but one, since they have the same purpose and journey, and tend to the same home? And why shall they not walk together in that way? When they shall arrive there they shall be fully one, and of one mind; not a jar nor difference, all their harps perfectly in tune to that one new song.

Having compassion.] This testifies, that it is not a bare speculative agreement of opinions that is the badge of christian unity; for this may accidentally be, where there is no further union; but that they are themselves one, and have one life, in that they feel how it is one with another. There is a living sympathy amongst them, as making up one body, animated with one spirit; for that is the reason why the members of the body have that mutual feeling, even the most remote and distant, and the most excellent with the meanest: this the Apostle urges at large[y].

And this lively sense is in every living member of the body of Christ towards the whole, and towards each other particular part. This makes a christian rejoice in the welfare and good of another, as if it were his own; and feel their griefs and distresses, as if himself were really sharer in them; for the word comprehends all feeling together, feeling of joy as well as of grief[z]. And always where there is most of grace, and of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, there is most of this sympathy. The Apostle St. *Paul,* as he was eminent in all grace, had a large portion of this[a]. And if this ought to be in

[y] Rom. xii. 4. and 1 Cor. xii. 14. 17.
[z] Heb. xiii. 3. 1 Cor. xii. 26. [a] 2 Cor. xi. 29.

reference to their outward condition, much more in spiritual things, rejoicing at the increases and flourishing of grace in others. That base envy that dwells in the hearts of rotten hypocrites, that would have all ingrossed to themselves, argues that they move not further than the compass of *self;* that the pure love of God, and the sincere love of their brethren flowing from it, is not in them; but when the heart can unfeignedly rejoice in the Lord's bounty to others, and the lustre of grace in others, far outshining their own; truly it is an evidence, that what grace such a one hath, is upright and good, and that the law of love is engraven in his heart. And where that is there will be likewise, on the other side, a compassionate tender sense of the infirmities and frailties of their brethren. Whereas some account it a sign of much advancement and spiritual proficiency to be able to sit in judgment upon the qualifications and actions of others, and to lavish out severe censures round about them; to sentence one weak and of poor abilities, and another proud and lofty, and a third covetous, *&c*; and thus to go on in a censorlike magisterial strain. But it were truly an evidence of more grace, not to get upon the bench to judge them, but sit down rather and mourn for them, when they are manifestly and really faulty; and for their ordinary infirmities, to consider and bear them. These are the characters we find in the scriptures; of stronger christians[b]. This holy and humble sympathy argues indeed a strong christian: *And nothing truly* (as one says) *shews a spiritual man so much, as the dealing with another man's sin*[c]. Far will he be from the ordinary way of insulting and trampling upon the weak, or using rigour and bitterness; even against some gross falls of a christian; but will rather vent his compassion in tears, than his passion in fiery railings; will bewail the frailty of man,

[b] Rom. xv. 1. Gal. vi. 1.

[c] Nil tam spiritualem virum indicat, quam peccati alieni tractatio.

and our dangerous condition in this life, amidst so many snares and temptations, and such strong and subtle enemies.

2dly, As this sympathy works towards particular christians in their several conditions, so by the same reason it acts, and that more eminently towards, the church, and the public affairs that concern its good. And this is it that we find hath breathed forth from the hearts of the saints in former times, in so many pathetical complaints and prayers for *Zion*. Thus *David*, in his saddest times, when he might seem most dispensable to forget other things, and be wholly taken up with lamenting his own fall[d], yet even there; he leaves not out the church[e], *In thy good pleasure do good to Zion*. And though his heart were broken all to pieces, yet the very pieces cry no less for the building of *Jerusalem's* wall, than for the binding up and healing of itself; and in that[f], that seems to be the expression of his joy being exhalted to the throne, and sitting peaceably on it; yet he still thus prays for *the peace of Jerusalem*. And the penman of that[g] makes it an execrable oversight to forget *Jerusalem*[h], or to remember it coldly or secondarily, no less will serve him than to *prefer it to his chief joy*. Whatsoever else is *top* or *head of his joy*, (as the word is) *Jerusalem's* welfare shall be its crown, shall be set above it. And the prophet, whoever it was that wrote that cii. *Psalm*, and in it poured out that prayer from *an afflicted soul*, comforts himself in this, that *Zion* shall be favoured. *My bones are consumed*, &c. "But it matters not what becomes "of me; let me languish and wither away, provided "*Zion* flourish; though I feel nothing but pains "and troubles, *yet thou wilt arise and shew mercy* "*to Zion;* I am content; that satisfies me[i]."

But where is now this Spirit of high sympathy with the church? Sure if there were of it in us, it is now a fit time to exert it. If we be not altogether

[d] Psal. li. [e] v. 17. [f] cxxii. Psalm. [g] cxxxvii. Psalm. [h] v. 5. [i] Psal. cii. 13.

dead, sure we shall be stirred with the voice of those late strokes of God's hand, and be driven to more humble and earnest prayer by it. When will men change their poor base grumblings about their private concerns? Oh! what shall I do? *&c.* into strong cries for the church of God, and the public deliverance of all these kingdoms from the raging sword? But vile selfishness undoes us, few or none looking further; if themselves and theirs might be secured, how many would regard little what became of the rest; as one said, *when I am dead, let the world be fired:* but the christian mind is of a larger sphere, and looks not only upon more than itself in present, but even to after times and ages; and can rejoice in the good to come, when itself shall not be here to partake of it: thus, it is more dilated, and liker unto God, and to our head Jesus Christ. *The Lord,* says the prophet[k], *In all his people's affliction, was afflicted himself;* and Jesus Christ accounts the sufferings of *his body, the Church,* his own; *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me*[l]? The heel was trode upon on earth, and the head crieth from Heaven, as sensible of it; and this in all our evils, especially our spiritual griefs, is a high point of comfort to us, that our Lord Jesus is not insensible of them. This emboldens us to complain ourselves, and to put in our petitions for help to *the throne of Grace* through his hand; knowing that when he presents them, he will speak his own sense of our condition, and move for us as it were for himself, as we have it sweetly expressed[m]. Now as it is our comfort, so it is our pattern.

Love as brethren. Hence springs this feeling we speak of: love is the cause of union, and union the cause of sympathy, and of that unanimity mentioned before. They that have the same spirit uniting and animating them, cannot but have the same mind, and the same feelings. And this spirit is derived from that head Christ, *in whom* christians *live, and move, and have their being,* their new and

[k] Isaiah lxiii. 9. [l] Acts ix. 4. [m] Heb. iv. 15, 16.

excellent being; and so living in him, they love him, and are one in him: they are *brethren*, as here the word is; their fraternity holds in him. He is head of it, *the first-born among many brethren*[n]. Men are brethren in two natural respects, their bodies being made of the same earth, and their souls breathed from the same God: but this third fraternity that is founded in Christ, is far more excellent and more firm than the other two; for being one in him, they have there taken in the other two, for that in him is our whole nature, he is the *man Christ Jesus;* but to the advantage, and it is an infinite one, being one in him, we are united by the divine nature in him, *who is God blessed for ever*[o], and this is the highest certainly, and the strongest union that can be imagined. Now this *is a great mystery* indeed, as the Apostle says[p], speaking of this same point, the union of Christ and his church; whence their union and communion one with another, that make up that body the church, is derived. In Christ every believer *is born of God*, is his Son; and so they are not only brethren, one with another, that are so born, but Christ himself owns them as his brethren: *both he which sanctifies, and they who are sanctified, are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren*[q].

Sin broke all to pieces, man from God, and one from another. Christ's work in the world was *union*. To make up these breaches he came down, and begun the union which was his work, in the wonderful union made in his person that was to work it, made God and man one: and as the nature of man was reconciled, so by what he performed, the persons of men are united to God. Faith makes them one with Christ, and he makes them one with the Father; and from these results this oneness amongst themselves, concentering and meeting in Jesus Christ, and in the Father through him, they are made one together. And that this was his great

[n] Rom. viii. 29. [o] Rom. ix. 5. [p] Eph. v. 32. [q] Heb. ii. 11.

work, we may read in his prayer[r], where it is the burden and main strain, the great request, he so reiterates, *that they may be one, as we are one*, v. 11. a high comparison, such as man durst not name, but after him that so warrants us: and again, v. 21. *that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that* they *also may be one in us*, and so on.

So that certainly where this is, it is the groundwork of another kind of friendship and love than the world is acquainted with, or is able to judge of, and hath more worth in one drachm of it than all the quintessence of civil or natural effection can amount to. The friendships of the world, the best of them, are but tied with chains of glass; but this fraternal love of christians is a golden chain, both more precious, and more strong and lasting; the other are worthless and brittle.

The christian owes, and pays a general charity and good-will to all; but peculiar and intimate friendship he cannot have, but with such as come within the compass of this fraternal love, which after a special manner, flows from God, and returns to him, and abides in him, and shall remain unto eternity.

Where this love is, and abounds, it will banish far away all those dissensions and bitternesses, and those frivolous mistakings which are so frequent amongst the most. It will teach wisely and gently to admonish one another, where it is needful: but further than that, it will pass by many offences and failings: it will *cover a multitude of sins*, iv. of this *Epist.* and v. 8. and will very much sweeten society, and make it truly profitable; therefore the Psalmist calls it both *good and pleasant that brethren dwell together in unity*, it perfumes all, as the precious ointments of *Aaron* refresh all, like the *dew of Hermon*[s].

But many that are called christians are not indeed of this brotherhood, and therefore no wonder they

[r] Joh. xvii. [s] Psal. cxxxiii. 2, 3.

know not what this love means, but are either of restless unquiet spirits, *biting and devouring one another*, as the apostle speaks[s], or at the best, only civilly smooth and peaceable in their carriage, but rather scorners than partakers of this spiritual love and fraternity, are strangers to Christ, not brought into acquaintance and union with him, and therefore void of the life of grace, and the fruits of it, whereof this is a chief one. Oh! how few amongst multitudes that throng in as we do here together, are indeed partakers of the *glorious liberty of the sons of God*[t], or ambitious of that high and happy estate?

As for you that know these things, and have a portion in them, that have your *communion with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ*[u], I beseech you adorn your holy profession, and testify yourselves the disciples and the brethren of Jesus Christ by this mutual love. Seek to understand better what it is, and to know it more practically. Consider that source of love, that *love that the Father hath bestowed upon us*, in this, *that we should be called the sons of God*[v], and so be brethren, and thence draw more of this sweet stream of love. *God is love*, says the apostle[x]; therefore sure where there is most of God, there is most of this divine grace, this holy love. Look upon and study much that infinite love of God and his Son Jesus Christ towards us, *He gave his only begotten Son*: the Son *gave himself*, he sweetened his bitter cup with his transcendent love; and this he hath recommended to us, that *even as he loved us, so should we love one another*[y]. We know we cannot reach this highest pattern, that is not meant: but the more we look on it, the higher we shall reach in this love, and shall learn some measure of such love on earth as is in Heaven, and that which so begins here shall be perfected there.

Be pitiful, be courteous.] The roots of plants are

[s] Gal. v. 15. [t] Rom. viii. 21. [u] 1 Joh. i. 3. [v] 1 Joh. iii. 1. [x] 1 Joh. iv. 8. [y] Joh. xv. 12.

hid under ground so that themselves are not seen, but they appear in their branches, and flowers, and fruits, which argue there is a root and life in them; thus the graces of the Spirit planted in the soul, though themselves invisible, yet discover their being and life in the tract of a christian's life, his words, and actions, and the frame of his carriage. Thus faith shews that *it lives*, as the apostle St. *James* teacheth at large[z], and thus love is a grace of so active a nature, that it is still working, and yet never weary; *your labour of love*, says the apostle[a]. It labours, but delight makes the hardest labour sweet and easy; and so proper is action to it, that all action is null without it[b]. Yea, it knits faith and action together, and is the link that unites them. *Faith worketh*, but it is by it, as the apostle teaches us, *by love*[c]: so then where this root is, these fruits will spring from it, and discover it, *pity* and *courtesy*.

They are of a larger extent in their full sphere than the preceding; for from a general love due to all, they act towards all, to men, or humanity, in the general: and this not from a bare natural tenderness, which softer complexions may have, nor from a prudent moral consideration of their own possible falling under the like or greater calamities, but out of obedience to God, who requires this mercifulness in all his children, and cannot own them for his, unless in this they resemble him. And it is indeed an evidence of a truly christian mind, to have much of this pity to the miseries of all, being rightly principled, and acting after a pious and christian manner towards the sick and poor, of what condition soever; yea, most pitying the spiritual misery of ungodly men, their hardness of heart and unbelief, and earnestly wishing their conversion; not repining at the long-suffering of God, "as if "thou wouldst have the bridge cut because thou "art over," as St. *Augustin* speaks, but longing ra-

[z] Ja. ii. 14, &c. [a] Heb. vi. 10. [b] 1 Cor. xiii. 1—3. [c] Gal v. 6.

ther to see *that long-suffering and goodness of God lead them to repentance*[d], being grieved to see men ruining themselves, and diligently working out their own destruction, *going in any way of wickedness*, (as *Solomon* speaks of one particularly) *as an ox to the slaughter, or a fool to the correction of the stocks*[e]. Certainly the ungodly man is an object of the highest pity.

But there is a special debt of this pity to those that we love as brethren in our Lord Jesus; these are most closely linked by a peculiar fraternal love. Their sufferings and calamities will move the bowels that have christian affection within them. Nor is it an empty helpless pity, but carries with it the real communication of our help to our utmost power, [illegible.] Not only bowels that are moved themselves with pity, but that move their hand to succour: for by this word, the natural affection of parents, and the tenderer of them, the mother, are expressed; who do not idly behold and bemoan their children being sick or distressed, but provide all possible help; their *bowels* are not only stirred, but dilated and *enlarged* towards them.

And if our feeling bowels and helping hand are due to all, and particularly to the godly, and we ought to pay this debt in outward distresses, how much more in their soul-afflictions; the rather, because these are most heavy in themselves, and least understood, and therefore least regarded; yea, sometimes rendered yet heavier by natural friends, possibly by their bitter scoffs and taunts, or by their slighting, or at best by their misapplying of proper helps and remedies, which as unfit medicines do rather exasperate the disease: therefore they that do understand, and can be sensible of that kind of wound, ought so much the more to be tender and pitiful towards it, and to deal mercifully and gently with it. It may be, very weak things sometimes trouble a weak christian; but there is in the spirit of the godly a humble condescension learned from

[d] Rom. ii. 4. [e] Prov. vii. 22.

Christ, who *broke not the bruised reed, nor quenched the smoaking flax*[f].

The least difficulties and scruples in a tender conscience should not be roughly encountered; they are as a knot in a silken thread, and require a gentle and wary hand to loose them.

Now this tenderness of bowels and inclination to pity all, especially christians, and them especially in their peculiar pressures, is not a weakness, as some kind of spirits take it to be; this even naturally is a generous pity in the greatest spirits. Christian pity is not womanish, yea it is more than manly, it is divine: there is of natural pity most in the best and most ingenuous natures, but where it is spiritual, it is a prime lineament of the image of God; and the more absolute and disengaged it is, in regard of those towards whom it acts, the more it is like unto God; looking upon misery as a sufficient incentive of pity and mercy, without the ingredient of any other consideration. It is merely a vulgar piece of goodness to be helpful and bountiful to friends, or to such as are within appearance of requital; it is a trading kind of commerce that: but pity and bounty, which need no inducements, but the meeting of a fit object to work on, where it can expect nothing, save only the privilege of doing good, (which in itself is so sweet) is god-like indeed; like him who is rich in bounty without any necessity, yea or possibility of return from us; for we have neither any thing to confer upon him, nor hath he need of receiving any thing, who is the spring of goodness and of being.

And that we may the better understand him in this, he is pleased to express this his merciful nature in our notion and language, by *bowels of mercy and pity*[g], and the *stirring* and *sounding* of them[h], by *the pity of a father*, and[i] by that *of a mother*; as if nothing could be tender and significant enough to express his compassions. Hence our redemp-

[f] Matt. xii 20. [g] Isa. liv. 7, 8. [h] Hos. xi. 8. and Psal. ciii. 13
[i] Isa. xlix. 15.

tion[k], hence all our hopes of happiness. The gracious Lord saw his poor creatures undone by sin, and no power in Heaven nor in earth able to rescue them but his own alone; therefore his pity was moved, and his hand answers his heart; *his own arm brought salvation*, he sent *the deliverer out of Zion to turn away iniquity from Jacob*[l]. And in all exigencies of his children, he is overcome with their complaints, and cannot hold out against their moanings; he may, as *Joseph*, seem strange for a while, but cannot act that strangeness long; his heart moves and sounds to theirs, gives the echo to their griefs and groans, as they say of two strings that are perfect unisons, touch the one, the other also sounds, *Surely I have heard Ephraim moaning himself*, &c. *Is Ephraim a dear son?* &c[m]. Oh! the unspeakable privilege to have him for our Father, who *is the Father of mercies and compassions*, and those not barren fruitless pityings, for he is withal *the God of all consolations*. Do not think that he can shut out a bleeding soul that comes to him, and refuse to take, and to bind up, and heal a broken heart that offers itself to him, puts itself into his hand, and intreats his help. Doth he require pity of us, and doth he give it to us, and is it not infinitely more in himself? All that is in angels and men is but an insensible drop to that ocean.

Let us then consider both that we are obliged to pity, especially to our christian brethren, and to use all means for their help within our reach; to have bowels stirred with the report of such bloodsheds and cruelties as come to our ears, and to bestir ourselves according to our places and power for them; but sure all are to move this one way, for their help, to run to the *throne of grace*: if your bowels sound for your brethren, let them sound that way for them, to represent their estate to him that is highest, both in pity and power; for he expects to be remembranced by us, he put that office upon his people to be his recorders for *Zion*, and they

[k] Isa. lxiii. 9. [l] Rom. xi. 26. [m] Jer. xxxi. 19.

are traitors to it, that neglect the discharge of that trust.

Courteous.] The former relates to the affiictions of others, this to our whole carriage with them in any condition: and yet there is a particular regard of it in communicating good, supplying their wants, or comforting them that are distressed; that it be not done, or rather, I may say, undone in doing it with such supercilious roughness, venting itself either in looks or words, or any way, that sours it, and destroys the very being of a benefit, and turns it rather into an injury. And, generally the whole conversation of men is made unpleasant by cynical harshness and disdain.

This courteousness which the apostle recommends, is not contrary to that evil only in the superfice and outward behaviour; no, religion doth not prescribe nor is satisfied with such as goes no deeper than words and gestures, which sometimes is most contrary to that singleness which religion owns. These are perhaps the upper garments of malice, *saluting him aloud in the morning*, whom they are undermining all the day. Or sometimes, though more innocent, yet it may be troublesome, merely by the vain affectation and excess of it; and even this becomes not a wise man, much less a christian: an over-study or acting of that, is a token of emptiness, and is below a solid mind; though they know such things, and could out-do the studiers of it, yet they (as it indeed deserves) do despise it. Nor is it that graver and wiser way of external plausible deportment that answers fully his word; it is the outer-half indeed; but the thing is [φιλοφροσύνη] a radical sweetness in the temper of the mind, that spreads itself into a man's words and actions: and this not merely natural, a gentle kind disposition, which is indeed a natural advantage that some have, but this is spiritual, from a new nature descended from Heaven, and so in its original and nature it far excels the other, supplies it where it is not in nature, and doth not only increase it where it is, but elevates it

above itself, renews it, and sets a more excellent stamp upon it. Religion is in this mistaken sometimes, in that men think it imprints an unkindly roughness and austerity upon the mind and carriage. It doth indeed bar and banish all vanity and lightness, and all compliance and easy partaking with sin. Religion strains and quite breaks that point of false and injurious courtesy, to suffer thy brother's soul to run the hazard of perishing, and to share of his guiltiness by not admonishing him after that seasonable, and prudent, and gentle manner, (for that indeed should be studied) which becomes thee as a christian, and that particular respective manner which becomes thy station. These things rightly qualifying it, it doth no wrong to good manners and the courtesy here enjoined, but is truly a part of it, by due admonitions and reproofs to seek to reclaim a sinner, for it were the worst unkindness not to do it, *Thou shalt not hate thy brother, thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy brother, and not suffer sin upon him*[n].

But that which is true lovingness of heart and carriage, religion doth not only no way prejudice, but you see requires it in the rule; and where it is wrought in the heart, works and causes it there; fetches out that crookedness and harshness that is otherwise invincible in some humours[o]. *Makes the wolf dwell with the lamb.* This christians should study, and belie the prejudices of the world, that they take up against *the power of Godliness;* should study to be inwardly so minded, and of such outward behaviour, as becomes that spirit of grace that dwells in them; to endeavour to gain those *that are without* by their kind obliging conversation.

In some copies, it is [ταπεινόφρονες] *humble*, and indeed as this is excellent in itself, and a chief character of a christian, it agrees well with all those mentioned, and carries along with it this inward and real, not acted courteousness. Not to insist on it now, it gains at all hands with God and with men;

[n] Lev. xix. 17. [o] Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros.

receives much grace from God, and kills envy, and commands respect and good will from men.

Those showers of grace that slide off from the lofty mountains rest on the vallies and make them fruitful. *He giveth grace to the lowly*[p], loves to bestow it where there is most room to receive it, and most return of ingenuous and entire praises upon the receipt: And such is the humble heart; and truly as much humility gains much grace, so it grows by it.

It is one of the world's reproaches against those that go beyond their size in religion, that they are proud and self-conceited: Christians, beware there be nothing in you justifying this. Sure they that have most true grace are least guilty of it. Common *knowledge and gifts may puff up*, but grace does not.

He whom the Lord loads most with his richest gifts, stoops lowest, as pressed down with the weight of them[q]; the free love of God humbles the heart most to which it is most manifested.

And towards men, it graces all grace and all gifts, and glorifies God, and teaches others so to do. It is the *preserver of graces*[r]: Sometimes it seems to wrong them by hiding them; but indeed it is their safety. *Hezekiah*, by a vain shewing of his jewels and treasures, forfeited them all[s]. 2 Kings xx. 12.

Ver. 9. *Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrarywise, blessing: Knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.*

OPPOSITION helps grace both to more strength and more lustre. When christian charity is not encountered with the world's malignance, it hath an easier task; but assaulted and overcoming, it shines

[p] Ja. iv. 6.

[q] Ille est qui superbire nescit, cui Deus ostendit misericordiam suam.

[r] Conservatrix virtutum. [s] Prodendo perdidit.

the brighter, and rises higher: And thus it is when it *renders not evil for evil.*

To repay good with evil is amongst men the top of iniquity; yet this is our universal guiltiness towards God, he multiplying mercies, and we vying with multiplied sins; as the Lord complains of *Israel, as they were increased, so they sinned.* The lowest step of mutual good amongst men, is not to be bent to provoke others with injuries, and being unoffended, to offend none. But this, not to repay offences, nor *render evil for evil,* is a christian's rule; and yet further, to return *good* for *evil,* and *blessing* for *cursing,* is not only counselled, (as some vainly distinguish) but commanded[t].

It is true, the most have no ambition for this degree of goodness; they aspire no further than to do or say no evil unprovoked, and think themselves sufficiently just and equitable, though they go no further: But this is lame; it is only half the rule. Thou thinkest injury obliges thee, or if not so, yet excuses thee to revenge, or at least disobliges thee, unties thy engagement of wishing and doing good; but these are all gross practical errors. For,

1*st,* The second injury done by way of revenge, differs from the first that provoked it little or nothing, but only in point of time; and certainly no one man's sin can procure privilege to another to sin in that, or the like kind. If another hath broken the bonds of his allegiance and obedience to God, and of charity to thee, yet thou art not the less tied by the same bonds still.

2*dly,* By revenge of injuries thou usurpest upon God's prerogative who is the *avenger,* as the Apostle teaches[u]. This doth not forbid either the magistrate's sword for just punishment of offenders, or the soldier's sword in a just war; but such revenges, as without authority or a lawful call, the pride and perverseness of men do multiply one against another: In which is involved a presump-

[t] Matth. v. 44. [u] Rom. xii. 19.

tuous contempt of God, and his supreme authority, or at least the unbelief and neglect of it.

3*dly*, It cannot be genuine upright goodness that hath its dependence upon the goodness of others that are about us. They say of the vain glorious man, his virtue lieth in the beholder's eye: And if thy meekness and charity be such as lieth in the good and mild carriage of others towards thee, in their hands and tongues, thou art not owner of it intrinsically: Such quiet and calm, if none provoke thee, is but an accidental uncertain cessation of thy turbulent spirit unstirred; but move it, and it exerts itself according to its nature, it sends up that mud that lay at the bottom: Whereas true grace doth then most manifest what it is, when those things that are most contrary surround and assault it. It cannot correspond and hold game with injuries and railings; it hath no faculty for that, for *answering evil with evil.* A tongue inured to graciousness, and mild speeches and blessings, and a heart stored so within, can vent no other, try it, and stir it as you will. A christian acts and speaks not according to what others are towards him, but according to what he is through the grace and Spirit of God in him. As they say, *quicquid recipitur, recipitur ad modum recipientis;* the same things are differently received and work differently as the nature and way is of that which receives them: A little spark blows up one of a sulphureous temper; and *many coals*, greater injuries and reproaches, are quenched and lose their force, being thrown at another of a *cool spirit*, as the original expression is[x].

They that have malice, and bitterness, and cursings within, though those sleep, it may be, yet, awake them with the like, and the provision comes forth *out of the abundance of the heart;* give them an ill word and they have another, or two for one in readiness for you; where the soul is furnished with spiritual blessings, there blessings come forth, even in answer to reproaches and indignities, *The mouth*

[x] Prov. xvii. 27.

of the wise is a tree of life, says *Solomon*[y], it can bear no other fruit, but according to its kind, and the nature of the root. An *honest* spiritual *heart,* pluck at it who will, they can pull no other fruit but such fruit. Love and meekness lodge there; and therefore whosoever knocks, these make the answer.

Let the world account it a despicable simplicity, seek you still more of that dove-like spirit, the spirit of meekness and blessing. It is a poor glory to vie in railings, to contest in that faculty, or any kind of vindictive returns of evil; the most abject creatures have abundance of that great spirit, as foolish poor spirited persons account it; *but it is the glory of man to pass by a transgression*[z]*;* this is the noblest victory, and, to excite us to aspire after it, we have, as we mentioned, the highest example. God is our pattern in love and compassions; we are well warranted to endeavour to be like him in this. Men esteem much more of some other virtues that make more shew, and trample upon these, love, and compassion, and meekness: But though these violets grow low, and are of a dark colour, yet they are of a very sweet and diffusive smell; odoriferous graces, and the Lord propounds himself our example in them, *To love them that hate you and bless them that curse you,* it is to be truly *the children of your Father,* your Father *which is in Heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good,* &c[a]. it is a kind of perfection, *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.* Be you like it, howsoever men behave themselves, keep you your course, and let your benign influence, as you can, do good to all. And Jesus Christ sets in himself these things before us, *Learn of me,* not to heal the sick, or raise the dead, but *learn, for I am meek and lowly in heart*[b]. And if you be his followers, this is your way; as the Apostle here addeth, *hereunto are you called,*

[y] Prov. x. 11. [z] Prov. xix. 11. [a] Matth. v. 44, 45. and v. 48.
[b] Matth. xi. 29.

and this is the end of it, agreeable to the way, *that you may inherit a blessing.*

[εἰδότες ὅτι] *Knowing that.*] Understanding aright the nature of your holy calling, and then considering it wisely and conforming to it.

They that have nothing beyond an external calling and profession of christianity, are wholly blind in this point, and do not think what this imports, *a christian.* Could they be drawn to this, it were much, it were indeed all, to know to what they are called, and to answer to it, to walk like it: But as one calls a certain sort of lawyers, *indoctum doctorum genus,* we may call the most, *an unchristian kind of christians.*

Yea, even they that are real partakers of this spiritual and effectual call, yet are much to seek in this; whereas they should be often viewing their rule, and laying it to their life, their hearts, and words, and actions, and squaring all these by it; should be often asking themselves, suits this my calling? Is this like a christian? It is a main point in any civil station to have a suitable convenient carriage to a man's station and condition, that his actions become him[c]: But how many incongruities and solecisms do we commit, forgetting ourselves, who we are, and what we are called to; to what, as our duty, and to what, as our portion and inheritance. And these indeed agree together, we are called to an *undefiled,* i. chap. of this epistle, *ver.* 4. *a holy inheritance,* and therefore likewise to be *holy* in our way to it, for that contains all. We are called to a better estate at home, and called to be fitted for it, while we are here; to an *inheritance of light*[d], and therefore to *walk* as *children of light*[e], and so here to *blessing,* as our inheritance, and to *blessing* as our duty; for this [εἰς τοῦτο *Thereunto*] relates to both, looks back to the one, and forward to the other, the way and the end, both *blessing.*

The fulness of this inheritance is reserved till we

[c] Caput artis est decere quod facias. [d] Colos. i. 12.
[e] Eph. v. 8.

come to that land where it lieth, there it abideth us: but the earnests of that fulness of *blessing* are bestowed on us here, *spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*[f], they descend from those heavenly places upon the heart, that precious *name* of our Lord Jesus *poured* on our hearts. If we be indeed interested in him, (as we pretend) and we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, we are put in possession of that blessing of forgiveness of sin, and are in terms of love and amity with the Father; being reconciled by the blood of his Son, and then blessed with the anointing of the Spirit, the graces infused from Heaven. Now, all these do so cure the bitter accursed distempers of our natural heart, and so perfume it, that it cannot well breathe any thing but sweetness and blessing towards others; being itself thus blessed of the Lord, it echoes blessing both to God and men, echoes to his blessing of it, and its words and whole carriage are *as the smell of a field that the Lord hath blessed*, as old *Isaac* said of his son's garments[g]. The Lord having spoke pardon to a soul, and instead of the curse due to sin, blessed it with a title to glory, it easily and readily speaks pardon, and not only pardon but blessing also, even to these that outrage it most, and deserve worst of it; reflecting still on that, "Oh! what de- "served I at my Lord's hands! when *so many ta-* "*lents are forgiven me*, shall I stick at *forgiving a* "*few pence?*"

And then called to *inherit a blessing:* so is every believer *an heir of blessing;* and not only are the spiritual blessings he hath received, but even his largeness of blessing others is a pledge to him, an evidence of that heirship. As those that are bent to cursing, though provoked, yet may look upon that as a sad mark, that they are heirs of a curse[h], *As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him—into his bowels like water, aad like oil into his bones.* And shall they not that delight in cursing, have then enough of it, when they shall hear that doleful

[f] Eph. i. 3. [g] Gen. xxvii. 27. [h] Psal. cix. 17, 18.

word, *Go ye cursed*, &c.? And, on the other side, as for the sons of blessing, that spared it not to any, the blessing they are heirs to, is blessedness itself, and they are to be entered into it by that joyful speech, *Come ye blessed of my Father*, &c.

Men can but bless one another in good wishes, and the Lord in praises, and applauding to his blessedness; but the Lord's blessing is really *making blessed;* an operative word, which brings the thing with it.

Inherit a blessing.] Not called to be exempted from troubles and injuries here, and to be extolled and favoured by the world; but on the contrary, rather to suffer the utmost of their malice, and to be the mark of their arrows, of wrongs, and scoffs, and reproaches. But it matters not, this weighs down all, *you are called to inherit a blessing*, which all their cursings and hatred cannot deprive you of. For as this inheriting of blessing binds on the duty of blessing others upon a christian, so it encourages to go through the hardest contrary measure they receive from the world. If the world should bless you, and applaud you never so loudly, yet their blessings cannot be called an inheritance; they fly away, and die out in the air, have no substance at all, much less that endurance that may make them an inheritance[i]. And more generally, is there any thing here that deserves so to be called? the surest inheritances are not more than *for term of life* to any one man; their abiding is for others that succeed, but he removes[k]; and when a man is to remove from all he hath possessed and rejoiced in here, then fool indeed, if nothing be provided fot the longer (O! how much longer) abode he must make elsewhere. Will he not then bewail his madness; that he was hunting a shadow all his lifetime, and may be turned out of all his quiet possessions and easy dwelling before that? and in these times we may

[i] Qui thesaurum tuum alieno in ore constituis, ignoras quod arca ista non clauditur?

[k] Si hæc sunt vestra, tollite ea vobiscum. S. Bern.

the more readily think of this: but at the utmost at night, when he should be for most rest, when that sad night comes after this day of fairest prosperity, the unbelieving unrepenting sinner lies down in sorrow, in a woeful bed; then must he, whether he will or no, enter to the possession of this inheritance of everlasting burnings. He hath an inheritance indeed, but he had better want it, and himself too be turned to nothing. Do you believe, there are treasures that *neither thief breaks into*, nor is there any inward *moth to corrupt them*[l], an inheritance, that though the whole world be turned upside down, is in no hazard of a touch of damage; *a kingdom*, that not only cannot fall, but *cannot be shaken*[m]? *Oh! be wise, and consider your latter end*, and whatsoever you do, look after this blessed inheritance. Seek to have the right to it in Jesus Christ, and the evidences and seals of it from his Spirit; and if it be so with you, your hearts will be upon it, and your lives will be like it.

Ver. 10. *For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.*

THE rich bounty of God diffuses itself throughout the world upon all; yet there is a select number that hath peculiar blessings of his *right hand*, which the rest of the world share not in; and even as to common blessings, they are differenced by a peculiar title to them, and sweetness in them: their blessings are blessings indeed, and entirely so, outside and inside, and more so within than they appear without; *the Lord* himself *is their portion*, and *they are his*. This is their blessedness, which in a low estate they can challenge, and so outvie all the painted prosperity of the world. Some kind of blessings do abundantly run over upon others; but *the cup of blessings* belongs unto the Godly by a new right from Heaven, graciously conferred upon

[l] Matth. vi. 20. [m] Heb. xii. 28.

them. Others are sent away *with gifts*, (as they apply that passage[a],) but the inheritance is *Isaac*'s; they are called to be *the sons of God*, and *are like him*, as his children, in goodness and blessings. The inheritance of blessing is theirs alone, *called*, says the Apostle, *to inherit a blessing*; and all the promises in the great charter of both testaments run in that appropriating stile, they are entailed to them, as the only heirs. Thus this is fitly translated, from the one testament to the other, by the apostle for his present purpose, *he that will love*, &c[b].

Consider, 1. The qualification required. 2. The blessing annexed and ascertained to it; the scope being to recommend a rule so exact, and for that purpose to propound a good so important and desirable, as a sufficient attractive to study and conform to that rule.

The rule is all of it one straight line, running through the whole tract of a godly man's life; yet you see clearly that it is not cut asunder indeed, but only marked into four, whereof the two latter parcels are somewhat longer, more generally reaching a man's ways, the two former particularly regulating the tongue.

In the ten words of the law that God delivered in so singular a manner both by word and writ from his own mouth and hand, there be two, that if not wholly, yet most especially and most expressly concern the tongue, as a very considerable, though a small part of man; and of these four words, here two are bestowed on it.

The Apostle St. *James* is large in this, teaching the great concernment of this point. *It is a little member* (says he) *but boasteth great things*[c], it needs a strong bridle: and the bridling of it makes much for the ruling the whole course of a man's life, as he there applies the resemblance; yea, he gives the skill of this as the very character of perfection. And if we consider it, it must indeed be of very great consequence how we use the tongue, it being the main

[a] Gen. xxv. 5, 6. [b] Psal. xxxiv. 13, 14. [c] Ja. iii. 5.

outlet of the thoughts of the heart, and the mean of society amongst men in all affairs civil and spiritual; by which men give birth to the conceptions of their own minds, and seek to beget the like in the minds of others. The bit that is here made for mens mouths, hath these two halfs that make it up, 1. To refrain from open evil speaking. 2. From double and guileful speaking.

From evil.] This is a large field, the evil of the tongue: but I give it too narrow a name; we have good warrant to give it a much larger, a whole universe, *a world of iniquity*[d], a vast bulk of evils, and great is the variety of them, as of countries on the earth, or creatures in the world; and multitudes of such are venomous and full of deadly poison, and not a few, monsters, new productions of wickedness, *semper aliquid novi*, as they say of *Africa*.

There be in the daily discourses of the greatest part of men many things that belong to this *world of evil*, and yet pass unsuspected, so that we do not think them to be within its compass; not using due diligence and exactness in our discoveries of the several parts of it, although it is all within ourselves, yea within a small part of ourselves, our tongues.

It were too quick a fancy to think to travel over this world of iniquity, the whole circuit of it, in an hour, yea or so much as to aim exactly at all the parts that can be taken of it in the smallest map: but some of the chief we would particularly take notice of, in the several four parts of it; for it will without constraint hold resemblance in that division with the other, the habitable world.

1. *Profane* speech, that which is grossly and manifestly wicked; and in that part lie, 1. Impious speeches, that directly reflect upon the glory and name of God, blasphemies, and oaths, and cursings, of which there is so great, so lamentable abundance amongst us; the whole land overspread and defiled with it, the common noise that meets a man in streets and houses, and almost in all places where he

[d] Ja. iii. 6.

comes: and to these, join those that are not uncommon amongst us neither, scoffs and mocking at religion, the power and strictness of it, not only by the grosser sort, but by pretenders to some kind of goodness; for they that have attained to a self-pleasing pitch of civility or formal religion, have usually that point of presumption with it, that they make their own size the model and rule to examine all by. What is below it, they condemn indeed as profane; but what is beyond it, they account needless and affected preciseness: and therefore are as ready as others to let fly invectives or bitter taunts against it, which are the keen and poisoned shafts of the tongue, and a persecution that shall be called to a strict account. 2. Impure or filthy speaking, which either pollutes or offends the hearers, and is the noisome breath of a rotten polluted heart.

2. Consider next, as another grand part of the tongue, *uncharitable* speeches, tending to the defaming and disgrace of others; and these are likewise of two sorts, 1. Open railing and reproaches. 2. Secret slander and detraction. The former is unjust and cruel, but it is somewhat the less dangerous, because open. It is a fight in plain field; but truly it is no piece of a christian's warfare to encounter it in the same kind. The sons of peace are not for those tongue combats; they are often no doubt set upon so, but they have another abler way of overcoming it than by the use of the same weapon; for they break and blunt the point of ill reproaches by meekness, and triumph over cursings with more abundant blessing, as is enjoined in the former words, which are seconded with these out of[e]. But they that enter the lists in this kind, and are provided one for another with enraged minds, are usually not unprovided of weapons, but lay hold on any thing that comes next[f], as your drunkards in their quarrels, in their cups and pots, if they have any other great reproach, they lay about them with that, as their sword; but if they want that, true or untrue, perti-

[e] Psal. xxxiv. 13, 14. [f] Furor arma ministrat.

nent or impertinent, all is one, they cast out any revilings that come next to hand. But there is not only wickedness, but something of baseness in these kind of conflicts that makes them more abound amongst the baser sort, and not so frequent with such as are but of a more civil breeding and quality than the vulgar.

But the other, of detraction, is more universal amongst all sorts, as being a far easier way of mischief in this kind, and of better conveyance. Railings cry out the matter openly, but detraction works all by surprises and stratagem, and mines under ground, and therefore is much more pernicious. The former are, as the *arrows that fly by day*, but this, *as the pestilence that walketh in darkness*, as these two are mentioned together in[g], it spreads and infects secretly and insensibly, is not felt but in the effects of it; and it works either by calumnies altogether forged and untrue, of which malice is inventive, or by the advantage of real faults, of which it is very discerning, and these are stretched and aggravated to the utmost. It is not expressible how deep a wound a tongue sharpened to this work will give, with a very little word and little noise, *as a razor*, as it is called in[h], that with a small touch cuts very deep, taking things by the worst handle, whereas charity will try about all ways for a good acceptation and sense of things, and takes all by the best. This pest is still killing some almost in all companies; it castesth down *many wounded*, as it is said of the strange woman[i], and they convey it under fair prefacing of commendation; so giving them poison in wine, both that it may pass the better, and penetrate the more. This is a great sin, that the Lord ranks with the first, when he *sets them in order* against a man[k], *Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother.*

3. *Vain fruitless* speeches are an evil of the tongue; not only those they call *harmless lies*, which some poor people take a pleasure in, and trade

[g] Psal. xci. 5, 6. [h] Ps. lii. 2. [i] Prov. vii. 26. [k] Psal. l. 20.

much in, light buffooneries and foolish jestings, but the greatest part of those discourses which men account the *blameless* entertainments one of another, come within the compass of this evil, frothy unsavoury stuff, tending to no purpose nor good at all; *effectless words*, [ἀργὸν] as our Saviour speaks[l], of which we must *render account in the day of judgment*, for that very reason. They are in this *world of evil* in the tongue, if no other way ill, yet ill they are, as the *Arabian* deserts and barren sands, because they are fruitless.

4. *Doubleness and guile*, so great a part, that it is here particularly named a part, though the evil of it is less known and discerned; and so there is in it, as I may say, much *terra incognita*: yet it is of a very large compass, we may confidently say, as large as all the other three together. What of mens speech is not manifestly evil in any of the other kinds, is the most of it naught this way: speech good to appearance, plausible and fair, but not upright; not silver, but *silver dross*, as *Solomon* calls it, *burning lips*, &c[m]. Each almost, some way or other, speaking falshood and deceit to his neighbour, and daring to act this faculty with God in his services, and our protestations of obedience to him. Religious speeches are abused by some in hypocrisy, as holy vestments, for a mask or disguise, doing nothing but *compassing him about with lies*, as he complains of *Ephraim*[n], *deceiving* indeed *ourselves*, while we think to deceive him who cannot be deceived, and *will not be mocked*[o]. He saw through the disguises and hypocrisy of his own people, when they came to enquire at him, and yet still entertained their heart-idols, as he tells the prophet[p].

The sins of each of us, would we enter into a strict account of ourselves, would be found to arise to a great sum in this kind; and they that do put themselves upon the work of self-trial, find, no doubt, abundant matter of deepest humbling, though

[l] Matth. xii. 36. [m] Prov. xxvi. 23. [n] Hos. xi. 12.
[o] Psal. xvii. 1. and Gal. vi. 7. [p] Ezek. xiv. 3.

they had no more, even in the sin of their lips, and are by it often astonished at the Lords's patience, considering his holiness; as *Isaiah* cried out[a], having seen the Lord in a glorious vision, this in particular falls upon his thoughts concerning himself and the people, *polluted lips, woe is me*, &c. And indeed it is a thing the godly mind cannot be satisfied with, *to make mention of the Lord*, till they be *touched with a coal from* the heavenly fire of *the altar*, and they especially that are called to be the Lord's messengers, will say as St. *Bernard*, "Had "the prophet need of a coal to unpollute his lips, "then do ministers require *totum globum igneum*, "a whole globe of fire." Go through the land, and see if the sins of this kind will not take up much of the bill against us, which the Lord seems now to have taken into his hands and to be reading, and about to take order with it, because we will not. Would we set ourselves to read it, he would let it fall. Is it not because of oaths that *the land mourns*, or I am sure hath now high cause to mourn? Mockings at *the power of godliness* fly thick in most congregations and societies. And what is there to be found almost but mutual detractions and *supplantings* of the good name of another, and *tongues taught to lies*[b], and that *frame*, or sow, and *weave together deceits*, as it is in *Psal.* l. 19. And even the godly, as they may be subject to other sins, so may they be under some degree of this: and too many are very much subject, by reason of their unwatchfulness and not staying themselves in this point, though not to profane, yet to vain, and it may be to detractive speeches; sometimes possibly not with malicious intention, but out of an inadvertence of this evil, readier to stick on the failings of men, and it may be of other christians, than to consider, and commend, and follow what is laudable in them, and it may be in their best discourses, not endeavouring to have hearts, in a becoming manner, purged from all guile and self-ends. Oh!

[a] Isa. vi. 5. [b] Jer. ix. 4, 5.

it is a thing needs much diligent study, and is worth it all, to be thoroughly sincere and unfeigned in all, and particularly in those things. Our Saviour's innocence is exprest so, *In his mouth was found no guile, chap.* ii. of this *Epist. v.* 22.

But to add something for remedy of those evils in some part discovered; for to *vanquish the world of evils* is a great conquest.

1. It must begin at the heart, otherwise it will be but a mountebank cure, a false imagined conquest. The weights and wheels are *there*, and the clock strikes according to their motion. Even he that speaks contrary to what is within him, guilefully contrary to his inward conviction and knowledge, yet speaks conformably to what is within him, in the temper and frame of his heart, which is double, *a heart and a heart*, as the Psalmist hath it[d]. A guileful heart makes guileful tongue and lips. It is the work-house, where is the forge of deceits and slanders, and other evil speakings; and the tongue is only the outer shop where they are vended, and the lips the door of it; so then such ware as is made within, such and no other can be set out. From evil thoughts, evil speakings; from a profane heart, profane words; and from a malicious heart, bitter or calumnious words; and from a deceitful heart, guileful words, well varnished, but lined with rottenness. And so in the general, *from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*, as our Saviour teaches[e]. That which the heart is full of, runs over by the tongue: if the heart be full of God, the tongue will delight to speak of him; much of heavenly things within will sweetly breathe forth something of their smell by the mouth; and if nothing but earth is there, all that man's discourse will have an earthly smell; and if nothing but wind, vanity, and folly, the speech will be airy, and vain, and purposeless. Compare Psal. xxxvii. 30, 31. Psal. xl. 8, 9. *Thy law*, says *David, is in my heart*, or, as the *Hebrew* phrase is, *in the midst of my bowels;*

[d] Psal. xii. 2. [e] Matt. xii. 34.

and that as from the center, sends forth the lines and rays of suitable words, and *I will not, cannot refrain,* as there it is added, *I have preached righteousness, I have not refrained;* so no more can the evil heart *refrain the tongue from evil,* as here is directed. *The tongue of the righteous,* says *Solomon, is as fined silver, but the heart of the wicked is little worth*[f]. It makes the antithesis *in the root;* his *heart* is little worth, and therefore his *tongue* has no silver in it: he may be *worth thousands,* (as we speak) that is indeed in his chests or lands, and yet himself, his heart, and all the thoughts of it, not worth a penny.

If thou art inured to oaths or cursing, in any kind or fashion of it, taking the great *name of God* any ways *in vain,* do not favour thyself in it as a small offence: to excuse it by custom, is to wash thyself with ink: and to accuse thyself deeper that thou art long practised in that sin. But if thou wouldst indeed be delivered from it, think not that a slight dislike of it, (when reproved) will do: seek for a due knowledge of the majesty of God, and thence a deep reverence of him in thy heart; and that will certainly help that habituated evil of thy tongue. It will quite alter that bias that the custom thou speakest of hath given it; will cast it in a new mould, and teach it a new language; will turn thy regardless abuse of that name, by vain oaths and asseverations, into a holy frequent use of it in prayers and praises. Thou wilt not then dare to dishonour that blessed name, that saints and angels bless and adore; but will set in with them to bless it.

None that know the weight of it, will dally with it, and *lightly lift it up* (as that word of *taking in vain* in the command signifies) they that do continue to *lift it up in vain,* as it were, to sport themselves with it, will find the weight of it falling back upon them, and crushing them to pieces.

In like manner a purified heart will unteach the tongue all filthy impure speeches, and will give it

[f] Prov. x. 20.

a holy strain; and the spirit of charity, and humility, will banish that mischievous humour, that sits so deep in the most, of reproaching and disgracing others in any kind, either openly or secretly. For it is wicked self-love, and pride of heart, whence those do spring, searching and disclosing the failings of others, on which love will rather cast a mantle to hide them.

It is an argument of a candid ingenuous mind, to delight in the good name and commendation of others; to pass by their defects, and take notice of their virtues; and to speak and hear of those willingly, and not endure either to speak or hear of the other; for in this indeed you may be little less guilty than the evil speaker, in taking pleasure in it, though you speak it not. And this is a piece of men's natural perverseness, to drink in tales and calumnies[g]; and he that doth this will readily from the delight he hath in hearing slide insensibly into the humour of evil-speaking. It is strange how the most dispense with themselves in this point, and that in no societies almost shall we find a hatred of this ill, but rather some tokens of taking pleasure in it; and until a christian set himself to an inward watchfulness over his heart, not suffering in it any thought that is uncharitable, or vain self-esteem, upon the sight of others frailties, he will still be subject to somewhat of this, in the tongue or ear at least. For the evil of guile in the tongue, a sincere heart, *truth in the inward parts*, powerfully redresses, therefore[h] it is expressed, *that speaketh the truth from his heart*, and it is added, *backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour*. Thence it flows, seek much after this, to speak nothing with God, nor men, but what is the sense of a single unfeigned heart. O sweet truth! excellent but rare sincerity! he that *loves that truth within* alone can work it there; seek it of him.

[g] Obtrectatio & livor primis auribus accipiuntur.
[h] Psal. xv. 2.

2dly, Be cautious in the choice of your society. *Sit not with vain persons*[i], whose tongues have nothing else to utter but impurity, or malice, or folly. Men readily learn the dialect, and tone of the people amongst whom they live. If you *sit* down *in the chair of scorners*, if you take a seat with them, you shall quickly take a share of their diet with them, and sitting amongst them, take your turn in time of speaking with them in their own language: But frequent the company of grave and godly persons; in whose hearts and lips, piety, and love, and wisdom are set, and it is the way to learn it.

3dly, Use a little of the bridle in the quantity of speech[k], incline a little rather to sparing than lavishing, for *in many words there wants not sin.* That flux of the tongue, that prating and babbling disease, is very common; and hence so many impertinencies, yea so many of these worse ills in their discourses, whispering about, and enquiring and censuring this and that. A childish delight! and yet most men carry it with them, all along to speak of persons and things not concerning us[l]. And this draws men to speak many things that agree not with the rules of wisdom, and charity, and sincerity. *He that refraineth his lips is wise*, saith *Solomon*[m]. A vessel without a cover cannot escape uncleanness; and much might be avoided by a little refraining of this; much of the infection and sin that is occasioned by the many babblings that are usual; and were it no worse, is it not a sufficient evil, that they waste away that time, precious time, that cannot be recovered, that the most just or most thankful man in the world cannot restore? He that spares speech, *favours his tongue* indeed, as the Latin phrase is, [*favere linguæ*] not that he looses the reins and lets it run. He may ponder and pre-exa-

[i] Psal. xxvi. 4.

[k] Χωρὶς τὸ τ' ειπειν πολλὰ καὶ τὰ καίρια, ÆSCHYL.

[l] Ουδὲν ἔτως ἡδυ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ὡς τὼ λαλειν τὰ ἀλλώτρια, 2 ORAT. 1.

[m] Prov. x. 19.

mine what he utters, whether it be profitable and seasonable or no; and so the tongue of the just is as *fined silver*[n], it is refined in the wise forethought and pondering of the heart, so is his advice, *Bis ad liman priusquam semel ad linguam.* Even to utter knowledge and wise things profusely holds not of wisdom; and a little usually makes most noise, as the Hebrew proverb is, *a penny in an earthen pot keeps a great sound and tinkling*[o]. Certainly it is the way to have much inward peace, to be wary in this point. Men think to have solace by much free unbounded discourse with others; and when they have done, they find it otherwise and sometimes contrary. He is wise that hath learned to speak little with others, and much with himself, and with God. How much might be gained for our souls, if we would make a right use of this silence. So *David* dumb to men, found his tongue to God[p]. A spiritually minded man is quickly weary of other discourse, but of that which he loves and wherewith his affection is possessed and taken up: *Grave æstimant quicquid illud non sonat quod intus amant.* And by experience, a christian will find it, that when the Lord is pleased to shew him most favour in prayer or other spiritual exercise, how unsavoury it makes other discourses after it; as they that have tasted something singularly sweet, think other things that are less sweet, altogether tasteless and unpleasant.

4*thly*, In the use of the tongue, when thou doest speak, divert it from evil and guile, by a habit of, and delight in profitable and gracious discourse; thus St. *Paul* makes the opposition[q]. Let there be no *rotten communication*, (σαπρὸς λογὸς,) and yet urges not total silence neither; but enjoins such speech *as may edify and administer grace to the hearers.*

Now in this we should consider, to the end such discourses may be more fruitful, both what is the

[n] Prov. x. 20. [o] Stater in lagena bis bis clamat.
[p] Psal. xxxviii. 13. 15. [q] Eph. iv. 29.

true end of them, and the right means suiting it. They are not only, nor principally, for the learning of some new things, or the canvassing of debated questions, but their chief good is the warming of the heart; stirring up in it love to God, and remembrance of our present and after estate; our mortality and immortality, and extolling the ways of holiness, and the promises and comforts of the Gospel, and the excellency of Jésus Christ; and in these sometimes one particular, sometimes another, as our particular condition requires, or any occasion makes them pertinent. Therefore in these discourses seek not so much either to vent thy knowledge, or to increase it, as to know more spiritually, and effectually what thou doest know. And in this way those mean despised truths, that each one thinks they are sufficiently seen in, will have a new sweetness and use in them, which thou didst not so well perceive before, for these flowers cannot be sucked dry, and in this humble sincere way thou shalt *grow in grace and in knowledge* too.

There is no sweeter entertainment than for travellers to be remembering their country; their blessed home, and the happiness abiding them there, and refreshing and encouraging one another in the hopes of it; strengthening their hearts against all the hard encounters and difficulties in the way; often overlooking this moment, and helping each other to higher apprehensions of that vision of God, which we expect.

And are not such discourses much more worthy the choosing, than the base trash we usually fill one another's ears withal. Were our tongues given us to exchange folly and sin? or were they not framed for the glorifying of God, and therefore are called *our glory?* Some take it for the soul; but they must be one in this, and then indeed are both our tongues and souls truly our glory, when they are busied in exalting his; and are tuned together to that, *That my glory may sing praise to thee and*

not be silent[r]. Instead of calumnies, and lies, and vanities that are the carrion, which base minds like flies feed on, to delight in divine things, and extolling of God, is for a *man to eat Angel's food.* An excellent task for the tongue that *David* chooseth[s], *And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness, and of thy praise all the day long.* Were the day ten in one, no vacant room for any unholy, or offensive, or feigned speech. And they lose not, who love to speak praise to him, for he loves *to speak peace* to them; and instead of the world's vain-tongue-liberty, to have such intercourse and discourse is no sad melancholy life, as the world mistakes it.

Ver. 11. *Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.*

THIS is a full and complete rule; but this is our miserable folly, to mistake so far, as embrace evil in the notion of good; and not only contrary to the nature of the thing, but contrary to our own experience, still to be pursuing that which is still flying further off from us, catching at a vanishing shadow of delight, with nothing to fasten upon but real guiltiness and misery. Childish minds! we have been so often gulled, and yet never grow wiser; still bewitched and deluded with dreams, *a deceived heart* (a mocked or deluded heart) *hath turned him aside*[t]. When we think we are surest, have that hand that holds fastest, our right hand upon some good, and now sure we are sped, even then it proves *a lie in our right hand*, slips through as a handful of air, and proves nothing; promises fair but doth but mock us, (as the same word is used by *Jacob*[u], expressing the unfaithfulness of his uncle that changed his ways so often) but still we foolishly and madly trust it. When it makes so gross a lie, that we might easily, if we took it to the light, see

[r] Psal. xxx. 12. [s] Psal. xxxv. 28. [t] Isai. xliv. 20, &c.
[u] Gen. xxxi. 7.

through it, being a lie so often discovered, and of known falshood; yet some new dream or disguise makes it pass with us again, and we go round in that mill, having our eyes put out, (as *Samson*) and still we are where we were, engaged in perpetual fruitless toil. Strange! that the base deceitful lusts of sin should still keep their credit with us! but *the beast* hath *a false prophet* at his side[x], to commend him and set him off with new inventions, and *causes us to err by his lies*, as it is said of the false prophets[y]. But evil it is still, not only void of all good, but the very deformity and debasement of the soul; defacing in it the divine image of its Maker, and impressing on it the vile image of satan; and then further it is attended with shame and sorrow, even at the very best; *it is a sowing of the wind*, there is no solid good in it, and withal a *reaping of the whirlwind*, vexations and horrors[z]. They that know it in the sense of this after-view attended with the wrath of an offended God, ask them what they think of it; if they would not in those thoughts rather chuse any trouble or pain though ever so great, than willingly to adventure on the ways of sin.

Obedience is that good, that beauty and comeliness of the soul, that conformity with the holy will of God, that hath peace and sweetness in it, the hardest of it is truly delightful even at present, and hereafter it shall fully be so. Would we learn to consider it thus, to know sin to be the greatest evil, and the holy will of God the highest good, it would be easy to persuade and prevail with men to comply with this advice, to *eschew* the one, and *do* the other.

These do not only reach the actions, but require an intrinsical aversion of the heart from sin, and a propension to holiness and the love of it.

Eschew.] The very motion and bias of the soul must be turned from sin, and carried towards God. And this is principally to be considered by us, and

[x] Rev. xix. 20. [y] Jer. xxiii. 32. [z] Hos. viii. 7.

enquired after within us; *an abhorrence of that which is evil,* as the scripture speaks[a], not simple forbearing, but hating and loathing it, and this springing from the love of God. *Ye that love the Lord, hate evil*[b], you will do so, cannot chuse but do so, and so may know that love to him to be upright and true.

And where this is, the avoidance of sin, and walking in holiness, or *doing good,* will be; 1. More constant, not wavering with the variation of outward circumstances, of occasion, or society, or secrecy; but going on in its natural course, as the sun is as far from the earth, and goes as fast under a cloud as when it is in our sight; and goes chearfully, because from a natural principle, *rejoiceth as a strong man to run*[c], such is the obedience of a renewed mind. And 2. More universal, as proceeding from an abhorrence of all sin; as natural antipathies are against the whole kind of any thing. 3. More exact, keeping afar off from the very appearances of sin, and from all the inducements and steps towards it; and this is the true way of eschewing it.

Not a little time of constrained forbearance during a night, or the day of participating of the communion, or a little time before, and some few days after such services; for thus with the most, sin is not dispossessed and cast out, but retires inward and lurks in the heart. Being beset with those ordinances, it knows they last but a while, and therefore it gets into its strength, and keeps close there, till they be out of sight and disappear again, and be a good way off, so that it thinks itself out of their danger; perhaps a good many days past, and then it comes forth and returns to exert itself with liberty, yea, it may be with more vigour, as it were to regain the time it hath been forced to lose and lie idle within.

They again miss in the right manner of this *eschewing,* that *think themselves* possibly *some body* in

[a] Rom. xii. 9. [b] Psal. xcvii. 10. [c] Psal. xix.

it, in that they do avoid the gross sins wherein the vulgar sort of sinners wallow, or do eschew such evils as they have little or no inclination of nature to. But where the heart stands against sin, as a breach of God's law, and an offence against his Majesty, as *Joseph, Shall I do this evil, and sin against God*[d]*?* there it will carry a man against all kind of sin, the most refined and the most beloved sin, wherein the truth of this aversion is most tried and approved. As they that have a strong natural dislike of some kind of meat, dress it as you will, and mingle it with what they love best, yet will not willingly eat of it; and if they be surprized and deceived some way to swallow some of it, yet they will find it after, and be restless till they have vomited it up again. Thus is it with the heart, that hath that inward contrariety to sin wrought in it by a new nature, it will consent to no reconcilement with it, nor with any kind of it. It is as in those deadly feuds, that were against whole families and names without exception. The renewed soul will *have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,* as the Apostle speaks[e]. For *what agreement is there betwixt light and darkness*[f]*?* And this hatred of sin works most against sin in a man's self, as in things we abhor, our reluctance rises most when they are nearest us. A godly man hates sin in others, as hateful, wheresoever it is found; but because it is nearest him in himself, he hates it most there. They, who by their nature and breeding are somewhat delicate, like not to see any thing uncleanly any where, but least in their own house, and upon their own cloaths or skin. This makes the godly man indeed fly not only the society of evil men, but from himself: He goes out of his old self; and till this be done, a man does not indeed fly sin[g], but carries it still with him as an evil companion, or an evil guide rather, that misleads him still from the paths of life. And there is much,

[d] Gen. xxxix. 9. [e] Eph. v. 11. [f] 2 Cor. vi. 14.
[g] Nondum te deseruisti.

first in the true discovery, and then the thorough disunion of the heart from that sin; which is most of all a man's self, that from which he can with the greatest difficulty escape, *that besets him most*, ευπεριστατον[h], and lieth in his way on all hands; hath him at every turn: To disengage and get free from that, *to eschew* that evil, is difficult indeed. And the task in this is the harder, if this evil be, as oftentimes it may be, not some gross one, but more subtile, that is less seen, and therefore not so easily avoided; but for this an impartial search must be used, if it be amongst those things that seem most necessary, and that cannot be wanting; *an idol hid amongst the stuff*, yet thence must it be drawn forth and cast out.

The right *eschewing of evil* is a wary avoidance of all *occasions* and *beginnings* of it. *Fly from sin* (says the wise man) *as from a serpent*[i], not to be tampering with it, and coming near it, and thinking to charm it. "For (as one says) who will not "laugh at the charmer that is bit with a serpent?" He that thinks he hath power and skill to handle it without danger, let him observe *Solomon*'s advice concerning the strange woman; he says not only, *Go not into her house*, but, *remove thy way far from her, and come not near the door of her house*[k], So teaches he wisely for the avoiding that other sin near to it, *Look not on the wine when it is red in the cup*[l]. They that are bold and adventurous are often wounded: Thus *he that removeth stones shall be hurt thereby*[m]. If we know our own weakness and the strength of sin, we shall fear to expose ourselves to hazards, and be willing even to abridge ourselves of some things lawful when they prove dangerous: For he that will do always all he lawfully may, shall often do something that lawfully he may not.

Thus for the other, [*doing of good*] the main thing is to be inwardly principled for it; to have a

[h] Heb. xii. 1. [i] Ecclesiasticus ii. 2. [k] Prov. v. 8.
[l] Prov. xxiii. 31. [m] Eccles. x. 9.

heart stamped with the love of God and his commandments, for conscience of his will, and love to him; and desire of his glory to do all. A good action, even the best kind of actions, in an evil hand, and from an evil unsanctified heart, passes amongst evils. Delight in the Lord and his ways. *David*'s, *Oh! how love I thy law*[n], can tell that he esteems it above the richest and pleasantest things on earth; but how much he esteems and loves it, he cannot express.

And upon this will follow, as in the former case of hating evil, a constant tract and course of obedience, moving directly contrary to the stream of wickedness about a man, and also against the bent of his own corrupt heart within him; a serious desire and endeavour to do all the good that is within our calling and reach, but especially that particular good of our calling, that which *is in our hand*, and is peculiarly required of us. For in this some deceive themselves; they look upon such a condition as they imagine were fit for them, or such as is in their eye when they look upon others, and think if they were such, and had such place, and such power and opportunities, they would do great matters, and in the mean time they neglect that good to which they are called, and which they have in some measure power and place to do. This is the roving sickly humour of our minds, and speaks their weakness; as sick persons that would still change their bed, or posture, or place of abode, thinking to be better: But a staid mind applies itself to the duties of *its own station*, and seeks to glorify him that set it there, reverencing his wisdom in disposing of it so. And there is certainty of a blessed approbation of this conduct, be thy station never so low; it is not the high condition, but much fidelity, secures it; *Thou hast been faithful in little*[o]. We must care not only to answer occasions when they call, but to catch at them, and seek them out; yea, to frame occasions of doing good, whether in the

[n] Psal. cxix. 97. [o] Luke xix. 17.

Lord's immediate service, delighting in that, private and public; or to men, in assisting one with our means, another with our admonitions, another with counsel or comfort as we can; labouring not only *to have something* of that good that is most contrary to our nature, but even *to be eminent in that;* setting christian resolution, and both the example and strength of our Lord against all oppositions, and difficulties, and discouragements, *Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith*[p], &c.

We see our rule, and it is the rule of peace and happiness; what hinders but we apply our hearts to it? This is our work, and setting aside the advantage that follows, consider the thing in itself, 1. The opposition of sin and obedience, under the name of *evil* and *good.* 2. The composition of our rule in these expressions, *eschew* and *do.* Consider it thus *evil* and *good,* and it will persuade us to *eschew* and *do.*

And if you are persuaded to it, then desire, 1. Light from above, to discover to you what is evil and offensive to God in any kind, and what pleaseth him, what is his will; for that is the rule and reason of good in our actions, *that ye may prove what is the good, and holy, and acceptable will of God*[q]. And to discover in yourselves what is most adverse and repugnant to that will. 2. Seek a renewed mind to hate that evil, the closest and most connatural to you, and to love that good, even that which is most contrary. 3. Strength and skill, that by another spirit than your own you may *avoid evil and do good,* and resist the incursions and solicitings of evil, the slights and violences of Satan, who is both a *serpent* and a *lion,* and power against your own inward corruption, and the fallacies of your own heart. And thus you shall be able for *every good work,* and be kept in such a measure as suits your present estate, *blameless in soul and body, to the coming of Jesus Christ*[r].

Oh! but will the humble soul reply, "I am often

[p] Heb. xii. 2. [q] Rom. xii. 2. [r] 1 Thess v. 23.

"entangled and plunged in soul-evils, and often "frustrate in my thoughts against these evils, and "in my aims at the good, which is my task and "duty."

And was not this *Paul's* condition? May you not complain in his language? And happy will you be, if you do so with some measure of his sense. Happy in crying out of *wretchedness!* Was not this his malady, *when I would do good, evil is present with me*[s]? But know once, that though thy duty is this, *to eschew evil and do good*, yet thy salvation is more surely founded than on thine own good. That perfection which answers justice and the law, is not required of thee: thou art *to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;* but in so walking, whether in a low or high measure, still thy comfort lieth in this, that *there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,* as the Apostle begins the next chapter after his sad complaints. Again, consider his thoughts in the close of the vii. chapter, perceiving the work of God in him, and differencing that from the corrupt notions of himself, and so finding at once matter of heavy complaint, and yet of chearful exultation, *O! wretched man that I am;* and yet with the same breath, *thanks to God, through Christ Jesus our Lord.*

So then mourn with him, and yet rejoice with him, and go on with courage as he did; still *fighting the good fight of faith*[t]. When thou fallest in the mire, be ashamed and humbled, yet return and wash in *the fountain opened*, and return and beg new strength to *walk more surely.* Learn to trust thyself less, and God more, and up and be doing against thine enemies, how *tall and mighty soever be the sons of Anak. Be of good courage*, and the Lord shall be with thee, and *shall strengthen thy heart,* and establish thy goings[u].

Do not lie down to rest upon lazy conclusions, that it is well enough with thee, because thou art out of the common puddle of profaneness; but look

[s] Rom. vii. 21. [t] 2 Tim. iv. 7. [u] Psal. xxvii. ult.

further, to purge *from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*[x]. Do not think thy little is enough, or that thou hast reason to despair of attaining more, but press, *press hard toward the mark and prize of thy high calling*[y]. Do not think all is lost, because thou art at present foiled: the experienced soldier knows that he hath often won the day after a fall, or a wound received[z]; and be assured, that after the short combats of a moment, follows an eternity of triumph.

Let him seek peace and ensue it.] Omitting the many acceptations of the word *peace*, here, particularly external peace with men, I conceive, is meant; and this is to be sought, and not only to be sought when it is willingly found, but we are to *pursue* and follow it when it seems to fly away: but yet so to pursue it, as never to step out of the way of holiness and righteousness after it, and to forsake this rule that goes before it, of *eschewing evil and doing good.* Yea, mainly in so doing is peace to be sought and pursued, and most readily to be found and overtaken in that way; for *the fruit of righteousness is peace*[a].

1*st*, Consider that an unpeaceable, turbulent disposition, is the badge of a wicked mind; *as the raging sea, still casting up mire and dirt*[b]. But this love of peace, and in all good ways seeking and pursuing it, is the true character *of the children of God*, who is *the God of peace.* True, the ungodly (to prevent their own just challenge as *Ahab*) call the friends of true religion disturbers, and the *troublers of Israel*[c]; and this will still be their impudence: but, certainly, they *that love the welfare of Jerusalem, do seek, and pray for*, and work for peace all they can; as a chief blessing, and the fruitful womb of multitudes of blessings.

2*dly*, Consider then, that to be deprived of peace,

[x] 2 Cor. vii. 1. [y] Philip. iii. 14.

[z] Novit se sæpe vicisse post sanguinem, SEN.

[a] Ja. iii. 18. [b] Isa. lvii. 20. [c] 1 Kings xviii. 17.

is a heavy judgment, and calls for our prayers and tears to pursue it, and intreat its return; to seek it from his hand that is the sovereign dispenser of peace and war; to seek to *be at peace with him, and thereby good, all good shall come unto us*[d], and particularly this great good of outward peace in due time; and the very judgment of war shall in the event be turned into a blessing. We may pursue it amongst men, and not overtake it; we may use all good means, and fall short: but pursue it up as far as the throne of grace; seek it by prayer, and that will overtake it, will be sure to find it in God's hand, *who stilleth the waves of the sea, and the tumults of the people*[e]. *If he give quietness, who then can disturb*[f]?

He that will love life.] This is the attractive, *life, long life, and days of good*, is the thing men most desire; for if *evil* days, then it is so much the worse that they be long, and the shortest of such seem too long; and if short being good, this cuts off the enjoyment of that good: but these two compleat the good, and suit it to mens wishes, length and prosperity of life.

It is here supposed that all would be happy, that all desire it, carried to that by nature, to seek their own good: but he that *will love it*, that is here, that will wisely love it, that will take the way to it, and be true to his desire, *must refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; he must eschew evil and do good, seek peace and ensue it.* You desire to see good days, and yet hinder them by sinful provocations; you desire good clear days, and yet cloud them by your guiltiness.

Thus many desire good here, yea, and confusedly the good of the life to come; because they hear it is life, and long life, and that good is to be found in it, yea, nothing but good: but in this is our folly, we will not love it wisely. The face of our desire is towards it, but in our course we are rowing from it, down into the dead sea. You would

[d] Job xxii. 21. [e] Psal. lxv. 7. [f] Job xxxiv. 29.

all have better times, peace and plenty, and freedom from the molestation and expence of our present condition: why will you not be persuaded to seek it in the true way of it?

But how is this? Do not the righteous often pass their days in distress and sorrow, so as to have *few and evil days*, as *Jacob* speaks[g]? Yet is there a truth in this promise, annexing outward good things to godliness, *as having the promises of this life and that which is to come*[h]; and it is so accomplished to them, when the Lord sees it convenient, and conducing to their highest good; but that he most aims at, and they themselves do most desire: and therefore, if the abatement of outward good, either as to the length or sweetness of this life, serve his main end and theirs better, they are agreed upon this gainful commutation, of good for infinitely better.

The life of a godly man, though short in comparison of the utmost of nature's course, yet may be long in value, in respect of his activity and attainment to much spiritual good. He may be said to live much in a little time; whereas they that wear out their days in folly and sin, *diu vivunt sed parum, i. e.* they live long, but little; or, as the same writer again speaks, *non diu vixit, diu fuit, i. e.* he lived not long, but existed long. And the good of the godly man's days, though unseen good, surpasses all the world's mirth and prosperity, that makes a noise, but is hollow within, as the *crackling of thorns*, a great sound, but little heat, and quickly done; as St. *Augustin* says of *Abraham*, he had *dies bonos in Deo, licet malos in seculo*, good days in God, though evil days in his generation. A believer can make up an ill day with a good God, and enjoying him, hath solid peace; but then that which is abiding, that length of days, and that dwelling in the house of God in that length of days, is that which *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard*, &c[i]. They are good days, or rather one everlasting day,

[g] Gen. xlix. 7. [h] 1 Tim. iv. 8. [i] 1 Cor. ii. 9.

which has *no need of the sun, nor moon,* but immediately flows from the first and increated light, *from the Father of lights;* his glory shines in it, *and the Lamb is the light thereof*[k].

Ver. 12. *For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.*

THE wisest knowledge of things is to know them in their causes; but there is no knowledge of causes so happy and useful, as clearly to know and firmly believe the universal dependence of all things upon the first and highest cause, the cause of causes, the spring of being and goodness, the wise and just ruler of the world.

This the Psalmist[l], and here with him the Apostle, gives as the true reason of that truth they have averred in the former words, the connexion of holiness and happiness. If life, and peace, and all good be in God's hand to bestow when it pleaseth him, then sure the way to it, is an obedient and regular walking, in observance of his will; and the way of sin is the way to ruin: *for the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, &c. and his face is against them that do evil.*

In the words there is a double opposition; of persons, and of their portion.

1*st*, Of persons, The *righteous* and *evil-doers.* These two words are often used in the scriptures, and particularly in the book of *Psalms*, to express the godly and the wicked; and so this righteousness is not absolute perfection or sinlessness, nor is the opposed evil, every act of sin, or breach of God's law: but the righteous be they that are students of obedience and holiness, that desire to walk as in the sight of God, and to *walk with God*, as *Enoch* did; that are glad when they can any way serve him, and grieved when they offend him; that feel and bewail their unrighteousness, and are earnestly breathing

[k] Rev. xxi. 23. [l] Psal. xxxiv. 15, 16.

and advancing forward; have a sincere and unfeigned love to all the commandments of God, and diligently endeavour to observe them; that vehemently hate what most pleases their corrupt nature, and love the command that crosses it most. This is an imperfect kind of perfection[m].

On the other side, evil-doers are they that commit sin *with greediness;* that walk in it, make it their way, that live in sin as their element, *taking pleasure in unrighteousness,* as the Apostle speaks[n]; their great faculty and their great delight lies in sin, they are skilful and chearful evil-doers: not any one man in all kind of sins, that is impossible; there is a concatenation of sin, and one disposes and induces to another; but yet one ungodly man is commonly more versed in and delighted with some one kind of sin, another with some other. He forbears none because it is evil and hateful to God, but as he cannot travel over the whole globe of wickedness, and go the full circuit, he walks up and down in his accustomed way of sin. No one mechanic is good at all trades, nor is any man expert in all arts; but he is an evil-doer that follows the particular trade of the sin he hath chosen, is active and diligent in that, and finds it sweet. In a word, this opposition lieth mainly in the bent of the affection, or in the way it is set. The godly man hates the evil he possibly by temptation hath been drawn to do, and loves the good he is frustrate of, and having intended, hath not attained to do. The sinner that hath his denomination from sin, as his course, hates the good that sometimes he is forced to do, and loves that sin which many times he does not; either wanting occasion and means, and so he cannot do it, or through check of an enlightened conscience, possibly dares not do: and though so bound up from the act as a dog in a chain, yet the habit, the natural inclination and desire in him, is still the same, the strength of his affection is carried to sin; as in the weakest godly man, there is that

[m] Phil. iii. 12. 15. [n] 2 Thess. xi. 12.

predominant sincerity and desire of holy walking, according to which he is called a *righteous person.* The Lord is pleased to give him that name, and account him so, being upright in heart, though often failing. There is a righteousness of a higher strain, upon which his salvation hangs, that is not in him, but upon him; he is cloathed with it: but this other of sincerity, and of true and hearty, though imperfect, obedience, is the righteousness here meant and opposed to evil doing.

2dly, Their opposite condition or portion is expressed in the highest notion of it; that wherein the very being of happiness and misery lieth, the favour and anger of God. As their natures differ most, by the habit of their affection towards God, as their main distinguishing character, so the difference of their estate consists in the point of his affection towards them, spoke here in our language by the divers aspects of his countenance; because our love and hatred usually looks out, and shews itself that way.

Now for the other word, expressing his favour to the righteous, by *the openness of his ear*, the opposition in the other needed not to be exprest; for either the wicked pray not, or if they do, it is indeed no prayer, the Lord doth not account nor receive it as such; and if his face be set against them, certainly his ear is shut against them too, and so shut that it openeth not to their loudest prayer, *Though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them, says the Lord*[o].

And before we pass to the particulars of their condition, as here we have them, this we would consider a little, and apply it to our present business, who are the persons whom the Lord thus regards, and to whose prayer he opens his ear.

This we pretend to be seeking after, that the Lord would look favourably upon us, and hearken to our suits, for ourselves, and this land, and the whole church of God within these kingdoms. In-

[o] Ezek. viii. 18.

deed *the fervent prayer of a faithful man availeth much,* [πολὺ ἰσχύει] it is of great strength, a mighty thing, that can bind and loose the influences of heaven (as there is instanced[a]); and the prayer of a righteous man, be it but of one righteous man; how much more the combined cries of many of them together. And, that we judge not the righteousness there and here mentioned, to be a thing above human estate, *Elias,* says the Apostle, *was a man, and a man subject to like passions as we are,* and yet such a righteous person as the Lord had an eye and gave ear to in so great a matter. But where are those righteous fasters and prayers in great congregations? How few, if any, to be found, that are but such in the lowest sense and measure, real lovers and enquirers after holiness? What are our meetings here, but assemblies of evil-doers, rebellious children, ignorant and profane persons, or dead formal professors, and so the more of us the worse, incensing the Lord more; and the multitude of prayers, though we could and would continue many days, all to no purpose, from such as we: *Though ye make make many prayers, when ye multiply prayer, I will not hear: and when ye spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you*[b]. Your hands are so filthy, that if you would follow me to lay hold on me with them, you drive me further off; as one with foul hands following a person that is neat to catch hold of him: and *if you spread them out before me,* my eyes are pure, you will make me turn away. I cannot endure to look upon them, *I will hide mine eyes from you.* And fasting, added with prayer, will not do it, nor make it pass; *When they fast, I will not hear their cry*[c].

It is the sin of his people that provokes him, instead of looking favourably upon them, to have *his eyes upon them for evil and not for good,* as he threatens[d]; and therefore, without putting away of that, prayer is lost breath, and doth no good.

[a] Ja. v. 16, 17. [b] Isa. i. 11. [c] Jer. xiv. 12. [d] Amos ix. 4.

They that still retain their sins, and will not hearken to his voice, how can they expect but that justly threatened retaliation[e], and that the Lord, in holy scorn in the day of their distress, should send them for help and comfort to those things which they have made their gods, and preferred before him in their trouble? *They will say, Arise and save us; but where are the gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble*[f].

And not only do open and gross impieties thus disappoint our prayers, but the lodging of any sin in our affection. *If I regard iniquity in my heart,* (says the Psalmist[g],) *the Lord will not hear my voice;* the word is, *If I see iniquity,* if mine eye look pleasantly upon it, his will not look so upon me, nor shall I find his ear so ready and open. He says not, if I do sin, but, *If I regard it in my heart.* The heart entertaining and embracing a sin, though it be a smaller sin, is more than the simple falling into sin. And as the ungodly do for this reason lose all their prayers, a godly man may suffer this way, in some degree, upon some degree of guiltiness; this way the heart seduced, it may be, and entangled for a time by some sinful lust, they are sure to find a stop in their prayers, that they neither go nor come so quickly, and so comfortably as before. Any sinful humour, as rheums do our voice, binds up the voice of prayer, makes it not so clear and shrill as it was wont; and the accusing guilt of it ascending, shuts up the Lord's ear, that he doth not so readily hear and answer as before. And thus that sweet correspondence is interrupted, which all the delights of the world cannot compensate.

If, then, you would have easy and sweet accesses to God in prayer, 1. Seek an holy heart, entertain a constant care and study of holiness; admit no parley with sin; do not so much as hearken to it, if you would be readily heard.

[e] Prov. i. 26. 28. [f] Jer. ii. 28. [g] Psal. lxvi. 18.

2. Seek a broken heart, the Lord is ever at hand to that, as it is in[h], whence the apostle cites the words now under our consideration, *He is nigh to them that are of a contrite spirit*, v. 18, &c. it is an excellent way to prevail. The breaking of the heart multiplies petitioners, every piece of it hath a voice; and a very strong and very moving voice, that enters his ear, and stirs the bowels and compassions of the Lord towards it.

3. Seek an humble heart. That may present its suit always, the court is constantly there, even within it, the great king loves to make his abode and residence in it[i]. This is the thing that the Lord so delights in and requires, he will not fail to accept of it, it is his choice[k], *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord*, &c. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and love mercy.* There is this righteousness, and that as a great part making it up, *to walk humbly with thy God;* in the original, *humble to walk with thy God*, he cannot agree with a proud heart; he hates and resists it, and *two cannot walk together unless they be agreed*, as the prophet speaks[l]. The humble heart only is company for God, hath liberty to walk and converse with him. *He gives grace to the humble;* he bows his ear, if thou lift not up thy neck: proud beggars he turns away with disdain, and the humblest suitors always speed best with him, the righteous, not such in their own eyes, but in his, through his gracious dignation and acceptance. And is there not reason to come humbly before him, base worms, to the most holy and most high God?

The eyes of the Lord.] We see, 1. That both are *in his sight*, the righteous and the wicked; all of them, and all their ways; his eye is on the one, and his face on the other, as the word is, but so on these as against them. It is therefore rendered his eye of knowledge and of observance, marking them and

[h] Psal. xxxiv. [i] Isa. lvii. 15. [k] Mic. vi. 7, 8. [l] Amos iii. 3.

their actions equally upon both. *There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves*[m]. Foolishly and wretchedly done, to do that, or think that, that we would hide from the Lord, and then to think that we can hide it! the prophet speaks woe to such. *Woe to them that dig deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say who seeth us, and who knoweth us*[n]? And this is the grand principle of all wickedness, not, it may be, expressly stated, but secretly lying in the soul, an habitual forgetting of God and his eye, not considering that he beholds us, *ye that forget God*, says the[o], thence all impiety proceeds; and on the other side, *the remembrance* of his eye is a radical point of piety and holiness, in which the[p] is large and excellent.

But, as the Lord doth thus equally see both, so as his eye and countenance imports his mind concerning them, and towards them, the manner of beholding them is different, yea contrary. And from the other, beholding in common, knowing their ways, arises this different beholding, which (as usually words of sense signify also the affection[q]) is the approving and disliking, the loving and hating them, and their ways: so he peculiarly *knows the righteous* and their *ways*[r], and *knows not, never knew, the workers of iniquity*, even those that by their profession would plead most acquaintance, and familiar converse, *eating and drinking in his presence*, and yet *I know you not, whence are you*[s]? It is not a breaking off from former acquaintance; no, he doth not that, he disavows none that ever were truly acquainted with him; so the other evangelist hath it[t], of those that thought to have been in no small account, *I never knew you, depart from me*, and the convincing reason lies in that, *Ye workers of*

[m] Job xxxiv. 22. [n] Isa. xxix. 15. [o] Psal. l. 22.
[p] cxxxix Psalm [q] Verba sensus connotant affectus.
[r] Psal. i. 6. [s] Luke xiii. 26. [t] Matth. vii. 23.

iniquity; none of his favourites and friends are such.

Thus here, his eye, his gracious eye for good, is on the righteous; and his face, his angry looks, his just wrath against evil-doers.

In the xith Psalm we have this expressed much after the same way, *First*, what we spoke of his knowing and beholding in common the righteous and wicked, and their ways, is represented by his *sitting on high*, where he may mark, and see clearly throughout all places and all hearts, *his throne is in Heaven, his eyes behold, his eye-lids try the children of men*[u]. He sits in Heaven, not as in a chair of rest, regardless of human things, but on *a throne*, for governing and judging; though with as little uneasiness and disturbance, as if there were nothing to be done that way. *His eyes behold*, not in a fruitless contemplation or knowledge; but *his eye-lids try*, which signifies an intent inspection, such as men usually make with a kind of motion of their eye-lids. Then upon this is added the different portion of the righteous and wicked, in his beholding them and dealing with them; he tries *the righteous*[x], approves what is good in them, and by trial and affliction doth purge out what is evil; and in both these, is love; *but the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth*, and therefore, as here, *his face is against them.* His soul and face are all one, but these things are expressed after our manner. He looks upon them with indignation; and thence come the storms in the next verse, *snares rained down*[y], the wariest foot cannot avoid such snares, they come down upon them from above; *Fire and brimstone, and burning tempest*, alluding to *Sodom*'s judgment, as an emblem of the punishment of all the wicked; *this is the portion of their cup.* There is a cup for them; but his children drink not with them. They have another cup, *the Lord* himself *is the portion of their cup*[z], his favor, as the xith Psalm closes, *The righteous Lord loveth*

[u] ver. 4. [x] ver. 5. [y] ver. 6. [z] Psal. xvi. 6.

righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright; that is another beholding than the former, gracious, loving beholding, as here, *his eyes are upon the righteous.*

Now the persuasion of this truth is the main establishment of a godly mind, amidst all the present confusions that appear in things; and it is so here intended, and in the Psalm I have mentioned, and throughout the scriptures,

To look upon the present flourishing and prosperity of evil-doers, and on the distresses and sorrows of the godly, is a dark obscure matter in itself; but the way to be cleared and comforted, is to look above them to the Lord, *They looked unto him and were lightened*[a]; that answers all doubts, to believe this undoubted providence and justice, the eye of God that sees all, yea rules all these things. And in the midst of all the painted happiness of wicked men this is enough to make them miserable, *the Lord's face is against them;* and they shall surely find it so. He hath wrath and judgment in store, and *will bring it forth to light;* will execute it in due time; he is preparing for them that cup spoke of, and they shall drink it. So in the saddest condition of his church and a believing soul, to know this, that the Lord's eye is even then upon them, and that he is upon thoughts of peace and love to them, is that which settles and composes the mind. Thus in that Psalm before cited, it was such difficulties that did drive *David's* thoughts to that for satisfaction, *If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do*[b]? In the time of such great shakings and confusions, the righteous man can do nothing to it, but the righteous Lord can do enough; he can do all: *The righteous Lord that loveth righteousness.* While all seems to go upside down, *he is on his throne,* he is *trying and judging,* and will appear to be judge. This is the thing that faithful souls should learn to look to, and not lose view and firm belief of, and should desire the Lord

[a] Psalm xxxiv. 5. [b] Psalm xi. 2.

himself to raise their minds to it, when they are like to sink. Natural strength and resolution will not serve the turn; floods may come that will arise above that; something above a man's own spirit must support him: therefore say with *David*[c], *When my spirit is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I.* They think sometimes it is so hard with them, he regards not, but he assures them of the contrary, *I have graven thee upon the palms of mine hands*[d]. I cannot look upon my own hands, but I must remember thee: *And thy walls are continually before me.* This is that the spouse seeks for, *set me as a seal upon thine arm*[e].

Now a little more particularly to consider the expressions and their scope here; how is that made good which the former words teach, that they that walk in the ways of wickedness can expect no good, but are certainly miserable? Thus, *the face of the Lord is against them.* Prosper they may in their affairs and estates, may have riches, and posterity, and friends, and the world caressing them, and smiling on them on all hands; but there is that one thing that damps all, *the face of the Lord is against them.* This they feel not indeed for the time, it is an invisible ill, out of sight and out of mind with them: but there is a time of the appearing of *this face of the Lord against them, the revelation of his righteous judgment,* as the Apostle speaks[f], sometimes precursory days of it here, but however one great prefixed day; *a day of darkness* to them indeed, wherein they shall know what this is, that now sounds so light, *to have the face of the Lord against them;* a look of it is more terrible than all present miseries combined together; what then shall the eternity of it be? *to be punished* (as the Apostle speaks) *with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power*[g]!

[c] Psalm lxi. 2. [d] Isa. xlix. 16. [e] Cant. viii. 6.
[f] Rom. ii. 5. [g] 2 Thess. i. 9.

Are we not then impertinent foolish creatures, that are so thoughtful how our poor businesses here succeed with us, and how we are accounted of in the world, and how the faces of men are towards us, and scarce ever enter into a secret serious enquiry how the countenance of God is to us, whether favourably shining on us or still angrily *set against us*, as it is against all impenitent sinners?

The face of the soul being towards God, turned away from the world and sin, argues for it, that his *face is not against it;* but that he hath graciously looked upon it, and by a look of love hath drawn it towards himself; for we act not first in that, *non amatur Deus nisi de Deo.* It is he that prevents us, and by the beams of his love kindles love in our hearts. Now the soul that is thus set towards him, it may be, doth not constantly see here his face shining full and clear upon it, but often clouded. Nay, it may be, such a soul hath not yet at all seen it sensibly; yet this it may conclude, seeing *my desires are towards him,* and my chief desire is the sweet *light of his countenance,* though as yet I find not his face shining on me, yet I am persuaded it is not *set against me* to destroy me. Misbelief, when the soul is much under its influence, and distempered by it, may suggest this sometimes too; but yet still there is some spark of hope that it is otherwise, that the eye of the Lord's pity is even in that estate upon us, and will in time manifest itself to be so.

To the other question, What assurance have the godly for that *seeing of good,* these blessings you speak of? This, *the eyes of the Lord are upon them, and his ears open to their prayer.* If you think him wise enough to know what is good for them, and rich enough to afford it, they are sure of one thing, he loves them; they have his good will, his heart is towards them, and therefore his eye and his ear. Can they then want any good? If *many days,* and outward good things be indeed good for them, they cannot miss of these. He hath given them al-

ready much better things than these, and hath yet far better in store for them; and what way soever the world go with them, this itself is happiness enough, that they are in his love, *whose loving kindness is better than life*[h]. Sweet days have they that live in it. What better days would courtiers wish, than to be still in the eye and favour of the king, to be certain of his good will towards them, and to know of access, and of a gracious acceptance of all their suits? Now thus it is with all the servants of the great king, without prejudice one to another; he is ready to receive their requests, and able and willing to do them all good. Happy estate of a believer! He must not account himself poor and destitute in any condition, for he hath favour at court; he hath the king's eye and his ear, *the eyes of the Lord are upon him, and his ears open to his prayers.*

The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous.] This hath in it, 1. His love, the propension of his heart towards them. The eye is the servant of the affection; it naturally turns that way most, where the heart is. Therefore thus the Lord is pleased to speak of his love to his own. He views still all the world, but he looks upon them with a peculiar delight; his eye is still on them, as it were towards them from all the rest of the world. Though he doth not always let them see these his looks, for it is not said, they always are in sight of it; no, not here; yet still his eye is indeed upon them, by the beauty of grace in them, his own work indeed, the beauty that he himself hath put upon them. And so the other of his ear too, he is willing to do for them what they ask, he loves even to hear them speak; finds a sweetness in the voice of their prayers that makes *his ear not only open to their prayers*, but desirous of them as sweet music. Thus he speaks of both[i], *My dove, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.*

[h] Psal. lxiii. 3. [i] Cant. ii. 14.

2. The phrase expresses his good providence and readiness to do them good; to supply their wants, and order their affairs for them; to answer their desires, and thus to let them find the fruits of that love that so leads his eye and ear towards them. *His eye is upon them*, he is devising and thinking what to do for them; it is the thing he thinks on most: his eyes are on all, but they are busied, as he is pleased to express it, *they run to and fro through the earth, to shew himself strong in behalf of them, whose heart is perfect towards him*, &c.[k] *His eyes are all the year on the land.* And no wonder, then, he answers their suits in what is good for them, when it is still in his thoughts before; *he prevents them with the blessings of his goodness*[l], they cannot be so mindful of themselves, as he is of them.

This is an unspeakable comfort, when a poor believer is in great perplexity of any kind in his outward or spiritual condition. "Well, I see no way; "I am blind in this, but there are *eyes upon me* that "see well what is best. The Lord is minding me, "and bringing about all to my advantage. *I am* "*poor and needy indeed, but the Lord thinketh* "*on me*[m]. That turns the balance. Would not a man, though he had nothing, think himself happy, if some great prince was busily thinking how to advance and enrich him? much more, if a number of kings were upon this thought, and devising together? yet *these thoughts might perish*, as the Psalmist speaks[n]. How much more solid happiness is it to have him, whose power is greatest, and whose thoughts fail not, eying thee, and devising thy good, and asking us as it were, *What shall be done to the man whom the king will honour?*

And his ears are open unto their prayer.] What suits thou hast, thou mayest speak freely; he will not refuse thee any thing that is for thy good.

"O! but I am not *righteous*, and all this is for

[k] 2 Chron. xvi. 9. So Deut. xi. 12. [l] Psalm xxi. 3.
[m] Psalm xl. 17. [n] Psalm cxlvi. 4.

" the righteous only." Yet thou wouldst be such a one. Wouldst thou indeed? then in part thou art; as he modestly and wisely changed the name of *wisemen* into *philosophers*, lovers of wisdom. Art thou not righteous? yet (φιλο δικαιος) a lover of righteousness thou art; then thou art one of these. If still thine own unrighteousness be in thine eye, it may and should be so, to humble thee; but if it should scare thee from coming unto God, and offering thy suits with this persuasion, that *his ear is open*, should it make thee think that his favourable eye is not toward thee: yet there is mercy, creep in under the robe of his Son. Thou art sure he is *Jesus Christ the righteous*, and that the Father's eye is on him with delight, and then it shall be so on thee, being in him. Put thy petitions into his hand, who is the great master of requests; thou canst not doubt that he hath access, and that ear open to him, which thou thinketh shut to thee.

The exercise of prayer being so important, and bearing so great a part in the life and comfort of a christian, it deserves to be very seriously considered. We will therefore subjoin some few considerations concerning it.

Prayer is considerable in a threefold notion, 1. As a duty we owe to God. As it is from him we expect and receive all; it is a very reasonable homage and acknowledgment thus to testify the dependence of our being and life on him; and the dependence of our souls upon him, for being, and life and all good; that we be daily suitors before his throne, and go to him for all. 2. As the dignity, and the delight of a spiritual mind, to have so near access unto God, and such liberty to speak to him. 3. As a proper and sure means, by divine appointment and promise, of obtaining at the hands of God those good things that are needful and convenient for us. And although some believers of lower knowledge do not (it may be) so distinctly know, and others not so particularly consider all these in it, yet there is a latent notion of them all in the heart of

every godly person, that stirs them and puts them on to the constant use of prayer, and to a love of it.

And as they are in these respects inclined and bent to the exercise of prayer, the Lord's ear is in like manner inclined to hear their prayer in these respects. 1. He takes it well at their hands, that they do offer it up as due worship to him, that they desire thus as they can to serve him. He accepts of those offerings graciously, passes by the imperfections in them, and hath regard to their sincere intention and desire. 2. It pleases him well, that they delight in prayer, as converse with him; that they love to be much with him, and to speak to him often, and still aspire by this way to more acquaintance with him, that they are ambitious of this. 3. He willingly hears their prayers as the expressions of their necessities and desires, being both rich and bountiful, he loves to have blessings drawn out of his hands that way; as full breasts delight to be drawn. The Lord's treasure is always full, and therefore he is always communicative. In the first respect, prayer is acceptable to the Lord *as incense and sacrifice*, as *David* desires[o], the Lord receives it as divine worship done to him. In the second, prayer is as the visits and sweet entertainment, and discourse of friends together, and so is pleasing to the Lord, as the free opening of the mind, *pouring out of the heart to him*, as it is called[p], and[q] calls it *his words* and *his meditation;* and the word for that signifies *discourse* or *conference.* And, in the third sense, he receives prayer as the suits of petitioners that are in favour with him, and that he readily accords to. And thus the words for *supplication* in the original, and the word here for *prayer* and that for *cry* in the Psalm, do mean; and in that sense the Lord's open ear and hearkening hath in it his readiness to answer, as one that doth hear, and to answer graciously and really, as hearing favorably.

I shall now add some directions, 1. For prayer,

[o] Psal. cxli. 2. [p] Psalm lxii. 8. [q] Psalm v. 1.

that it may be accepted and answered. 2. For observing the answers of it.

1. For prayer, the qualification of the heart that offers it. 2. The way of offering it.

1. As to the qualification of the heart, it must be in some measure a holy heart, according to that word here, *the righteous*, there must be *no regarding iniquity*, entertaining of friendship with any sin, but a permanent love and desire of holiness. Thus indeed a man prays within himself, as in a sanctified place, whither the Lord's ear inclines, as of old to the temple; he need not run superstitiously to a church, &c. *intra te ora, sed vide priùs an sis templum Dei.* The sanctified man's body is the *temple of the Holy Ghost*, as the apostle speaks[r], and his soul the priest in it, that offers sacrifice: both holy to the Lord, consecrated to him. *2dly*, It must be a believing heart, for there is no praying without this. Faith is the very life of prayer, whence spring hope and comfort with it, to uphold the soul, and keep it steady under storms with the promises; and as *Aaron* and *Hur* to *Moses*, keeping it from fainting, strengthening the hands when they would begin to fail. Such is the force of that word[s], for the *preparing of the heart* which God gives as an assurance and pledge of his *inclining his ear to hear*, it signifies the *establishing of the heart*, as that indeed is a main point of its preparedness, and due disposition for prayer. Now this is done by faith; without which the soul, as the apostle St. *James* speaks, is a rolling unquiet thing, *as a wave of the sea*, of itself unstable as the waters, and then *driven with the wind and tossed*[t] to and fro with every temptation. See and feel thine own unworthiness as much as thou canst, for thou art never bid to believe in thyself, no, but that is countermanded as faith's great enemy. But what hath thy unworthiness to say against free promises of grace, which are the basis of thy faith? So then believe, that you may pray; this is *David's* advice[u], *Trust in him at all times ye people,*

[r] 1 Cor. vi. 19. [s] Psal. x. 17. [t] Jam. i. 6. [u] Psal. lxii. 8.

and then *pour out your hearts before him.* Confide in him as a most faithful and powerful friend, and then you will open your hearts to him.

2. For the way of offering up prayer; it is a great art, a main part of the secret of religion to be skilled in it, and of great concern for the comfort and success of it. Much is here to be considered, but for the present take these advices briefly. 1. Offer not to speak to him without the heart in some measure seasoned and prepossessed with the sense of his greatness and holiness. And there is much in this; considering wisely to whom we speak, *the king, the Lord of glory,* and setting the soul before him, in his presence; and then reflecting on ourselves, and seeing what we are, how wretched, and base, and filthy, and unworthy of such access to such a great majesty. The want of this *preparing of the heart* to speak in the Lord's ear, by the consideration of God and ourselves, is that which fills the exercise of prayer with much guiltiness; makes the heart careless, and slight, and irreverent, and so displeases the Lord, and disappoints ourselves of that comfort in prayer, and answers of it, that otherwise we would have more experience of. We rush in before him with any thing, provided we can tumble out a few words; and do not weigh these things, and compose our hearts with serious thoughts and conceptions of God. The soul that studies and endeavours this most, hath much to do to attain to any right apprehensions of him; for *how little know we of him?* yet should we at least, set ourselves before him as the purest and greatest Spirit; a being infinitely more excellent than our minds or any creature can conceive. This would fill the soul with awe and reverence, and balast it, so as to make it go more even through the exercise; to consider *the Lord,* as that prophet saw him, *sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him,* on his right hand, and on his left[a], and thyself a defiled sinner coming before him, *as a vile frog creeping out of some pool*[b]: how would this fill thee with holy fear? Oh!

[a] 1 Kings xxii. 19. [b] Velut e palude suâ vilis ranuncula, BERN.

his greatness and our baseness, and Oh! the distance. This is *Solomon's* advice, *Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God, for God is in heaven and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few*[c]. This would keep us from our ordinary babblings, that heart nonsense, which, though the words be sense, yet through the inattention of the heart, are but as impertinent confused dreams in the Lord's ears, as there follows, *ver.* 3.

2. When thou addressest thyself to prayer, desire and depend upon the assistance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God; without which thou art not able truly to pray. It is a supernatural work, and therefore the principle of it must be supernatural. He that hath nothing of the Spirit of God cannot pray at all. He may howl as a beast in his necessity or distress; or may speak words of prayer, as some birds learn the language of men; but pray he cannot. And they that have that spirit ought to seek the movings and actual workings of it in them in prayer; the particular *help of their infirmities*[d], teaching both what to ask, a thing, that of ourselves we know not, and then enabling them to ask; breathing forth their desires in such sighs and groans, as are the breath not simply of their own, but of God's Spirit.

3. As these two precautions are to be taken before prayer, so in the exercise of it you should learn to keep a watchful eye over your own hearts throughout for every step of the way, that they start not out; by the keeping up of a continued remembrance of that presence of God, which in the entry of the work, is to be set before the eye of the soul. And our endeavour ought to be, to fix it upon that view, that it turn not aside nor downwards, but from beginning to end keep sight of him, who sees and marks whether we do so or no. They that are most inspective, and watchful in this, will still be faulty in it; but certainly the less watchful the more faulty: and this we ought to do, to be aspiring daily to more stability of mind in prayer, and driving

[c] Eccl. v. 2. [d] Heb. iv. 15.

out somewhat of that roving and wandering, that is so universal an evil; and certainly so grievous, not to those that have it most, but that observe and discover it most, and endeavour most against it. A strange thing! that the mind, even the renewed mind, should be so ready, not only at other times, but in the exercise of prayer, wherein we peculiarly come so near to God, yet even then to slip out and leave him, and follow some poor vanity or other instead of him. Surely the godly man when he thinks on this, is exceedingly ashamed of himself, cannot tell what to think of it; *God his exceeding joy*, whom in his right thoughts he esteems so much above the world, and all things in it, yet to use him thus, when he is speaking to him; to break off from that, and hold discourse, or change a word with some base thought that steps in, and whispers to him; or at the best not to be stedfastly minding the Lord to whom he speaks, and possest with the regard of his presence, and of his business and errand with him.

This is no small piece of our misery here; these wandrings are evidence to us that we are not at home; but though we should be humbled for this, and still labouring against it, yet should we not be so discouraged, as to be driven from the work. Satan would desire no better than that; it were to help him to his wish; and sometimes a christian may be driven to think, What! shall I do still thus, abusing my Lord's name, and the privilege he hath given me? I had better leave off. No, not so by any means; strive against the miserable evil in thee, but cast not away thy happiness. Be doing still. It is a froward childish humour, when any thing agrees not to our mind, to throw all away. Thou mayest come off as *Jacob*, with *halting* from thy *wrestlings*, and yet obtain *the blessing for which thou wrestled*[e].

4. Those graces, which are the due qualities of the heart, disposing it for prayer in the exercise of it, should be excited and acted; as holiness, the love of it, the desire of increase and growth of it; so the

[e] Gen. xxxii. 24, &c.

humbling and melting of the heart, and chiefly faith, which is mainly set on work in prayer, to draw forth the sweetnesses and virtues of the promises, to desire earnestly their performance to the soul, and to believe that they shall be performed; to have before our eyes his goodness and faithfulness, who hath promised, and to rest upon that. And for success in prayer, exercising faith in it, it is altogether necessary to interpose the Mediator, and look through him, and to speak and petition by him; who warns us of this, that there is no other way to speed, *No man cometh to the Father but by me*[f]. As the *Jews* when they prayed looked toward the temple, where was the mercy-seat, and the peculiar presence of God [*Schechinah;*] thus ought we in all our praying to look on Christ, who is our *propitiatory*, and *in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily*[g]. The forgetting of this may be the cause of our many disappointments.

5. Fervency; not to seek coldly, that presages refusal. There must be fire in the sacrifice, otherwise it ascends not. There is no sacrifice without incense, and no incense without fire. Our remiss dead hearts are not likely to do much for the church of God, nor for ourselves. Where are those strong cries that should pierce the heavens? *His ear is open to their cry.* He hears the faintest coldest prayer, but not with that delight and propenseness to grant it, his ear is not on it, as the word here is[h]; he takes no pleasure in hearing it, but cries, heart-cries. Oh! those take his ear, and move his bowels; for these are the voice, the cries of his own children. A strange word of encouragement to importunity, *Give him no rest*[i], suffer him not to be in quiet, till *he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.* A few such suitors in these times were worth thousands such as we are. Our prayers stick in our breasts, scarce come forth, much less do they go up and ascend with that piercing force, that would open up the way for deliverances to come down.

[f] John xiv. 6. [g] Col. ii. 9. [h] Psm. lv. 17. [i] Isa. lxii. 7.

But in this must be some difference of temporal and spiritual things. The prayer in the right strain cannot be too fervent in any thing, but the desire of the thing in temporals may be too earnest. A feverish distempered heat diseases the soul, therefore, in these things, a holy indifferency concerning the particular, may, and should be joined with the fervency of prayer. But in spiritual things, there is no danger in vehemency of desire; *covet* these, *hunger and thirst* for them, be incessantly ardent in the suit; yet even in those in some particulars, as for the degree and measure of grace, and some peculiar furtherances, they should be presented so with earnestness, as that withal it be with a reference and resignation of it to the wisdom and love of our Father.

2. For the other point, the answer of our prayers, which is in this *openness of the ear*, it is a thing very needful to be considered and attended to; if we think that prayer is indeed a thing that God takes notice of, and hath regard to in his dealing with his children, it is certainly a point of duty and wisdom in them to observe how he takes notice of it, and bends his ear to it, and puts his hand to help, and so answers it. This both furnishes matter of praise, and stirs up the heart to render it. Therefore in the Psalms, *the hearing of prayer* is so often observed and recorded, and made a part of the song of praise. And withal it endears both God and prayer unto the soul, as we have both together[k], *I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice and my supplications;* the transposition in the original is pathetical, *I love, because the Lord hath heard my voice.* I am in love, and particularly this causes it, I have found so much kindness in the Lord, I cannot but love, *He hath heard my voice.* And then it wins his esteem and affection to prayer, seeing I find this virtue in it, we shall never part again; *I will call upon him as long as I live.* Seeing prayer draweth help and favours from heaven,

[k] Psalm cxvi. 1.

I shall not be to seek for a way in any want or strait that can befal me.

In this there is need of direction: but too many rules may as much confuse a matter as too few, and do many times perplex the mind and multiply doubts, as many laws do multiply pleading. Briefly then,

1. Slothful minds do often neglect the answers of God, even when they are most legible in the grant of the very thing itself that was desired. It may be through a total inadvertence in this kind, never thinking on things as answers of our requests; or, possibly, a continual eager pursuit of more turns away the mind from considering what it hath upon request obtained; still so bent upon what further we would have, that we never think what is already done for us, which is one of the most ordinary causes of ingratitude.

2. But though it be not in the same thing that we desire, yet when the Lord changes our petitions in his answers, it is always for the better; he regards (according to that known word of St. *Augustin*[1]) our *well* more than our *will*. We beg deliverance, we are not unanswered, if he give patience and support; be it under a spiritual trial or temptation, *My grace is sufficient for thee*. And where the Lord doth thus, it is certainly better for the time than the other would be. Observe here, *his ears are open to the righteous*, but *his eyes are on them too:* They have not so his ear as blindly to give them what they ask, whether it be fit or no, but *his eye is on them*, to see and consider their estate, and to know better than themselves what is best, and accordingly to answer. This is no prejudice, but a great privilege and happiness of his children, that they have a Father that knows what is fit for them, and *withholds no good* from them. And this commutation and exchange of our requests a christian observing, may usually find out the particular answer of his prayers; and if sometimes he doth not, then his best way is not to subtilize and amuse him-

[1] Si non ad voluntatem, ad utilitatem.

self much in that, but rather to keep on in the exercise, knowing (as the apostle speaks in another case) this for certain, *that their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*[m]; and as the prophet hath it[n], *He hath not said unto the house of Jacob, seek ye me in vain.*

3. Only this we should always remember, not to set bounds and limits to the Lord in point of time, to set him a day, that thou wilt attend so long and no longer. How patiently will some men bestow long attendance on others, where they expect some very poor good or courtesy at their hands? but we are very brisk and hasty with him, who never delays us but for our good, to ripen those mercies for us, that we, as foolish children, would pluck while they are green, and have neither that sweetness and goodness in them which they shall have in his time. All his works are done in their season. Were there nothing to check our impatiences but his greatness, and the greatness of those things we ask for, and our own unworthiness, these might curb them, and persuade us how reasonable it is that we wait. He is a king well worth waiting on; and there is in the very waiting on him an honour and happiness far above us: and the things we seek are great, forgiveness of sins, evidence of sonship and heirship; heirship of a kingdom; and we condemned rebels, born heirs of the bottomless pit. And shall such as we be in such haste with such a Lord in so great requests! but further, the attendance that this reason enforces, is sweetened by the consideration of his wisdom and love, that he hath foreseen and chosen the very hour for each mercy fit for us, and will not slip it a moment. Never any yet repented their waiting, but found it fully recompensed with the opportune answer in such a time as then they are forced to confess was the only best. *I waited patiently*, says the Psalmist, *in waiting I waited*, but it was all well bestowed, *He inclined to me and heard my cry, brought me up*[o], &c.; and then he afterwards falls into admiration of the Lord's method, his *wonderful workings and thoughts to us-ward.* "While I was waiting and saw

[m] 1 Cor. xv. ult. [n] Isa. xlv. 19. [o] Psm. xl. 1.

"nothing, thy *thoughts were towards* and for me, "and thou didst then *work* when thy goodness was "most remarkable and *wonderful.*"

When thou art in great affliction outward or inward, thou thinkest (it may be) he regards thee not; yea, but he doth. Thou art his gold, he knows the time of refining thee, and then taking thee out of the furnace, he is versed and skilful in that work. Thou sayest, "I have cried long for power against sin, and "for some evidence of pardon, and find no answer "to either;" yet leave him not, he never yet cast away any that sought him, and staid by him, and resolved, whatsoever came on it, to lie at his footstool, and to wait, were it all their lifetime, for a good word or a good look from him. And they chuse well that make that their great desire and expectation; for one of his good words or looks will make them up, and make them happy for ever; and as he is truth itself, they are sure not to miss of it, *Blessed are all they that wait for him.* And thou that sayest, thou canst not find pardon of sin, and power against it; yet consider whence are those desires of both, that thou once didst not care for. Why dost thou hate that sin which thou didst love, and art troubled and burdened with the guilt of it, under which thou wentest so easily, and didst not feel before? Are not these something of his own work? Yes sure. And know he will not leave it unfinished, nor *forsake the work of his hands*[p]. *His eye may be on thee,* though thou seest him not, *and his ear open to thy cry,* though for the present he speaks not to thee as thou desirest. It is not said that his children always see and hear him sensibly; but yet when they do not, he is beholding them and hearing them graciously, and will shew himself to them, and answer them seasonably.

David says[q], *I cry in the day time, and thou hearest not, and in the night season, and am not silent;* yet will he not entertain hard thoughts of God, nor conclude against him; on the contrary, acknowledges, *thou art holy*[r], where, by *holiness,* is meant his faithfulness (I

[p] Psm. cxxxviii. 8. [q] Psm. xxii. 2. [r] ver. 3.

conceive) to his own, as follows, *that he inhabits the praises of Israel*, to wit, for the favours he hath shewed his people, as *ver.* 4, *Our fathers trusted in thee.*

Let the Lord's open ear persuade us to make much use of it[s]. Be much in this sweet and fruitful exercise of prayer, together and apart, in the sense of these three considerations mentioned above; the duty, the dignity, and the utility of prayer.

1. The *duty:* It is due to the Lord to be worshipped and acknowledged thus, as the fountain of good. How will men crouch and bow one to another upon small requests; and shall he only be neglected by the most, from whom *all* have *life, and breath, and all things!* as the apostle speaks in his sermon[t]. And then,

2. Consider the *dignity* of this, to be admitted into so near converse with the highest majesty. Were there nothing to follow, no answer at all, Prayer pays itself in the excellency of its nature, and the sweetness that the soul finds in it. Poor wretched man, to be admittted into heaven while he is on earth, and there to come and speak his mind freely to the Lord of heaven and earth, as his friend, as his Father! to empty all his complaints into his bosom, to refresh his soul in his God, wearied with the follies and miseries of the world! Where there is any thing of his love, this is a privilege of the highest sweetness; for they that love, find much delight to discourse together, and count all hours short, and think the day runs too fast that is so spent; and they that are much in this exercise, the Lord doth impart *his secrets* much to them[u]. And

3. Consider again it is the most profitable exercise; no lost time, as profane hearts judge it, but only gained. All blessings attend this work; it is the richest traffic in the world, for it trades with heaven, and brings home what is most precious there. And as holiness fits to prayer, so prayer befriends holiness, increases it much. Nothing so refines and pu-

[s] Clavis diei & sera noctis. [t] Acts xvii. 25. [u] Psm. xxv. 14.

rifies the soul as frequent prayer. If the often conversing with wise men doth so teach and advance the soul in wisdom, what then will the converse of God? This makes the soul to despise the things of the world, and in a manner makes it divine; winds up the soul from the earth, acquainting it with delights that are infinitely sweeter.

The natural heart is full stuffed with prejudices against the way of holiness, that dissuade and detain it; and therefore the holy scriptures are most fitly much in this point of asserting the true advantage of it to the soul, and in removing those mistakes it has of that way.

Thus here, and to press it the more home, *v.* 10, &c. the Apostle having used the Psalmist's words, now follows it forth in his own, and extends what was said concerning the particular way of meekness and love, &c. in the general doctrine to all the paths of *righteousness*.

The main conclusion is, that happiness is the certain consequent and fruit of holiness; all good, even outward good, so far as it holds good, and is not inconsistent with a higher good. If we did believe this more, we should feel it more, and so upon feeling and experiment, believe it more strongly. All the heavy judgments we feel or fear, are they not the fruit of our own ways, of profaneness, and pride, and malice, and abounding ungodliness? All cry out of hard times, evil days; and yet who is taking the right way to better them? Yea, who is not still helping to make them worse? Are we not ourselves the greatest enemies of our own peace? Who looks either rightly backward, reflecting on his former ways, or rightly forward, to direct his way better that is before him? Who either says, *What have I done*[x]*?* or, *What ought I to do*[y]*?* And indeed the one of these depends on the other[z], *I considered my ways* (says *David*) turned them over and over (as the word is) *and then I turned my feet unto thy testimonies*[a].

[x] Jer. viii. 6. [y] Acts xvi. 30.
[z] Consilium futurum ex præterito venit, SEN. [a] Psm. cxix. 59.

Are there any, for all the judgments fallen on us, or that threaten us, returning apace with regret and hatred of sin; hastening unto God, and *mourning and weeping as they go?* bedewing each step with their tears? Yea, where is that newness of life that the world has called for so long, and now the word and the rod together are so loud calling for? Who more *refraining his tongue from evil, and lips from guile;* changing oaths, and lies, and calumnies, into a new languge, into prayers, and reverend speaking of God, and joining a suitable consonant carriage? who is *eschewing evil and doing good*, labouring to be fertile in holiness, *to bring forth much fruit to God?* This were the way *to see good days* indeed; this is the way to the longest life, the only long life and *length of days*, one eternal day, as St. *Augustin* on these words, *one day in thy courts is better than a thousand*[a], *Millia dierum desiderant homines, & multum volunt hic vivere; contemnant millia dierum, desiderent unum, qui non habet ortum & occasum, cui non cedit hesternus, quem non urget crastinus.*

The reason added is above all exception, it is supreme, *The eyes of the Lord*, &c. If he that made times and seasons, and commands and forms them as he will, if he can give *good days*, or make men happy, then the only way to it sure must be the way of his obedience; to be in the constant favour of the great king, and still in his gracious thoughts; to have his eye and his ear, if this will serve the turn, (and if this do it not, I pray you, what will?) then the righteous man is the only happy man, *For the eyes of the Lord are upon him*, &c. Surer happy days may be expected hence, than theirs that draw them from the aspect of the stars; the eyes of the Father of lights benignly beholding them, the *trine aspect* of the blessed Trinity. The love he carries to them draws his eye still towards them; there is no forgetting of them, nor slipping of the fit season to do them good, his mind I may say, runs on that; he sees how it is with them, and receives their suits gladly, rejoicing to put fa-

[a] Psm. lxxxix. 10.

vours upon them. He is their assured friend, yea he is their Father: what then can they want? Surely they cannot miss of any good that his love and power can help them to.

But his face is against them that do evil.] So our happiness and misery are in *his face*, his looks. Nothing so comfortable as his favourable face, nothing so terrible again as his face; *his anger*, as the *Hebrew* word is often taken, that signifies *his face:* And yet how many sleep sound under this misery! but believe it, it is a dead and a deadly sleep; the Lord standing in terms of enmity with thee, and yet thy soul *at ease!* pitiful accursed ease! I regard not the differences of your outward estate; that is not a thing worth the speaking of. If thou be poor and base, and in the world's eye but a wretch, and withal under the hatred of God, as being an impenitent hardened sinner, those other things are nothing; this is the top, yea the total sum of thy misery: or be thou beautiful, or rich, or noble, or witty, &c. or all these together, or what thou wilt, but is *the face of the Lord against thee*[b]? Think as thou wilt, thy estate is not to be envied but lamented. I cannot say, much good do it thee, with all thy enjoyments, for it is sure they can do thee *no good;* and if thou dost not believe this now, the day is at hand wherein thou shalt be forced to believe it, finding it then irrevocably true. If you will, you may still follow *the things of the world, walk after the lusts of your own hearts*, neglect God, and please yourselves, but as *Solomon's* word is of judgment[c], *Remember that the face of the Lord is against thee*, and in that judgment he shall unvail it, and let thee see it against thee. Oh! the most terrible of all sights.

The godly often do not see the Lord's favourable looks, while he is eyeing them; and the wicked usually do not see nor perceive, neither will believe that *his face is against them:* but besides that, the day of full discovery is coming; the Lord doth sometimes let both the one and the other know somewhat how he stands affected towards them. In peculiar deliver-

[b] Splendida miseria. [c] Eccles. ix. 9

ances and mercies, he tells his own, that he forgets them not, but both sees and hears them, when they think he does neither, after that loving and gracious manner they desire, and is here meant; and sometimes he lets forth glances of his bright countenance, darts in a beam upon their souls that is more worth than many worlds. And on the other side, he is pleased sometimes to make it known that his face is against the wicked, either by remarkable outward judgments, which to them are the vent of his just enmity against them, or to some he speaks it more home in horrors and affrights of conscience, which to them are earnests and pledges of their full misery, that *inheritance of woe* reserved, as the joys and comforts of believers are, of their *inheritance of glory.*

Therefore if you have any belief of these things, be persuaded, be intreated to forsake the way of ungodliness. Do not flatter yourselves, and dream of escaping; when you hear of outward judgments on your neighbours and brethren, tremble and be humbled. Remember our Saviour's words, *Think ye that those on whom the tower of Siloam fell were greater sinners than others? I tell you, nay, but except you repent you shall all likewise perish*[d]. This seeming harsh word he that was wisdom and sweetness itself uttered, and even in it spoke like a Saviour; he speaks of perishing, that they might not perish, and presses repentance by the heavy doom of impenitence.

When you hear of this, there is none of you would willingly chuse it, *that the Lord's face should be against you,* although upon very high offers made to you of other things. You think, I know, that the very sound of it is somewhat fearful; and on the other side, have possibly some confused notion of his favour, as a thing desirable; and yet do not bestir yourselves, to avoid the one and enquire after the other, which is certainly by reason of your unbelief. For if you think of the love of God, as his word speaks of it, and as you will say you do, whence is

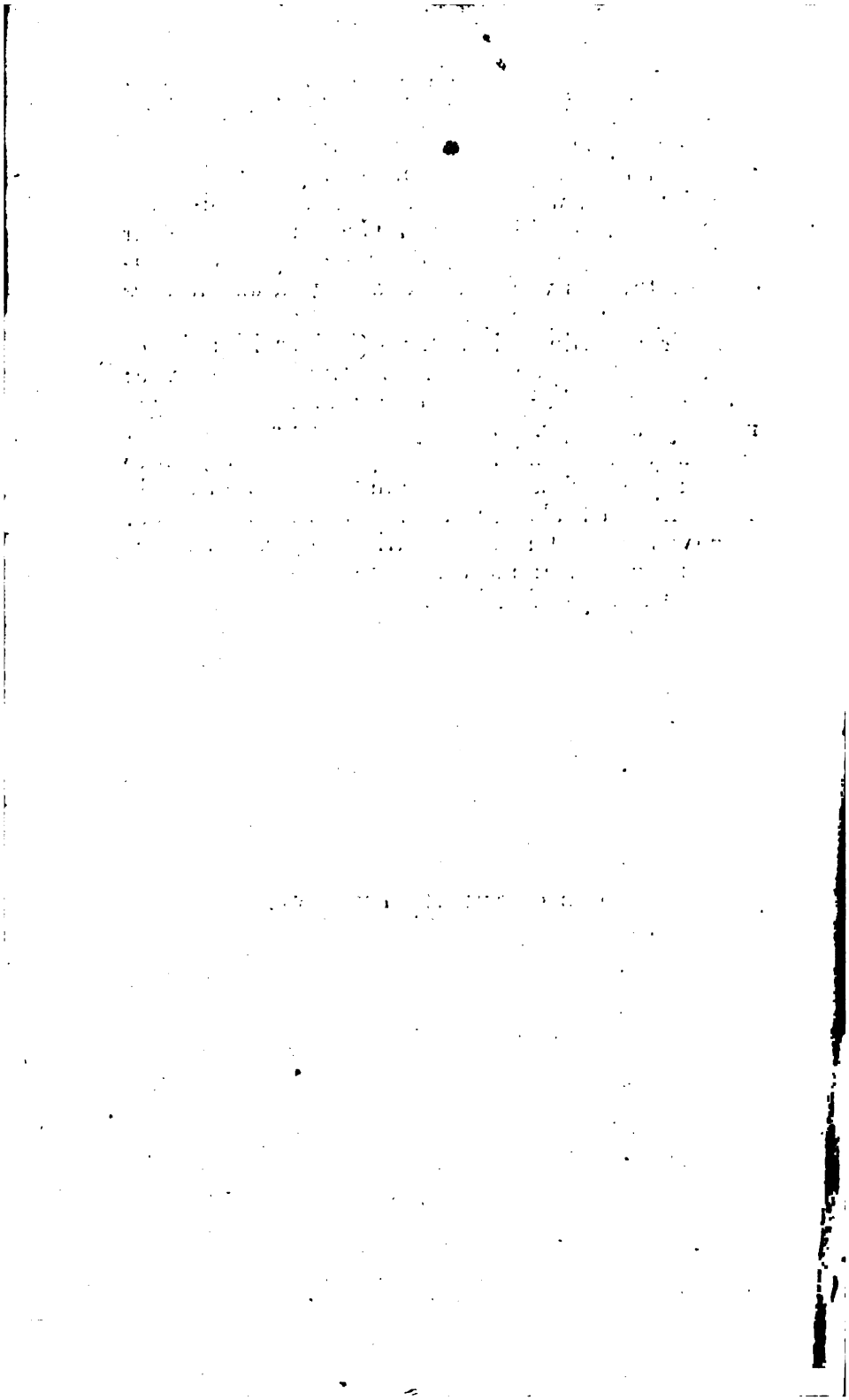
[d] Luke xiii. 1– 5.

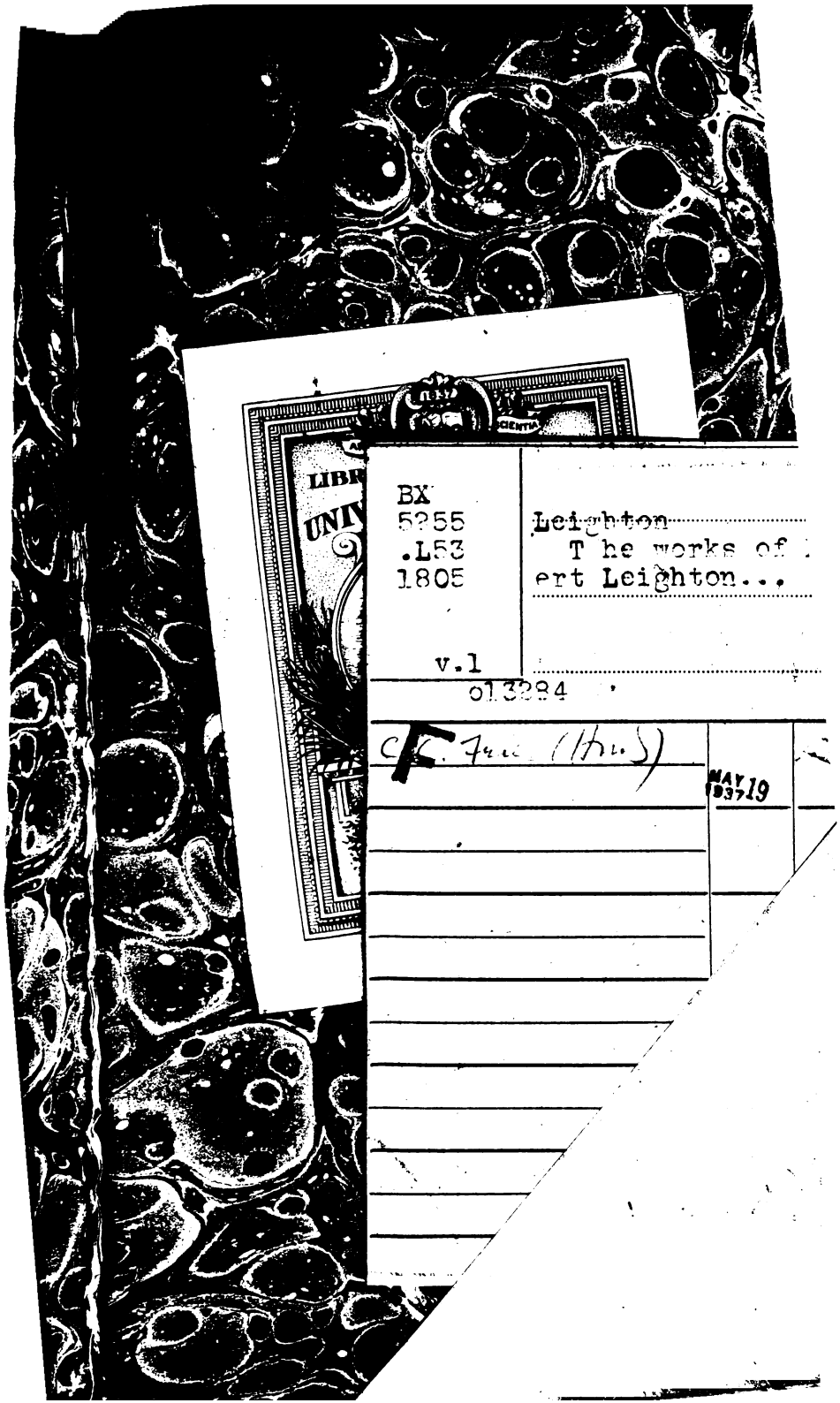
it, I pray you, that there is no trifle in this world that will not take more deeply with you, and which you follow not with more earnestness, than this great business of reconciliation with God, in order to your finding his face not only not against you, but graciously towards you; *His eyes upon you, and his ears open to your prayer.*

Your blessedness is not, no (believe it) it is not where most of you seek it, in things below you: How can that be? It must be a higher good must make you happy. While you labour and sweat for it in any thing under the sun, your pains run all to waste; you seek a happy life in the region of death. Here, here it is alone, in the love and favour of God, to have his countenance and friendship, and free access and converse; and this is no where to be found but in the ways of holiness.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

Nicholson, Printer, Warner Street.




LIBR
UNIV
SCIENTIA
BX
5255
.L53
1805
Leighton
T he works of
ert Leighton...
v.1
013284
MAY 1919